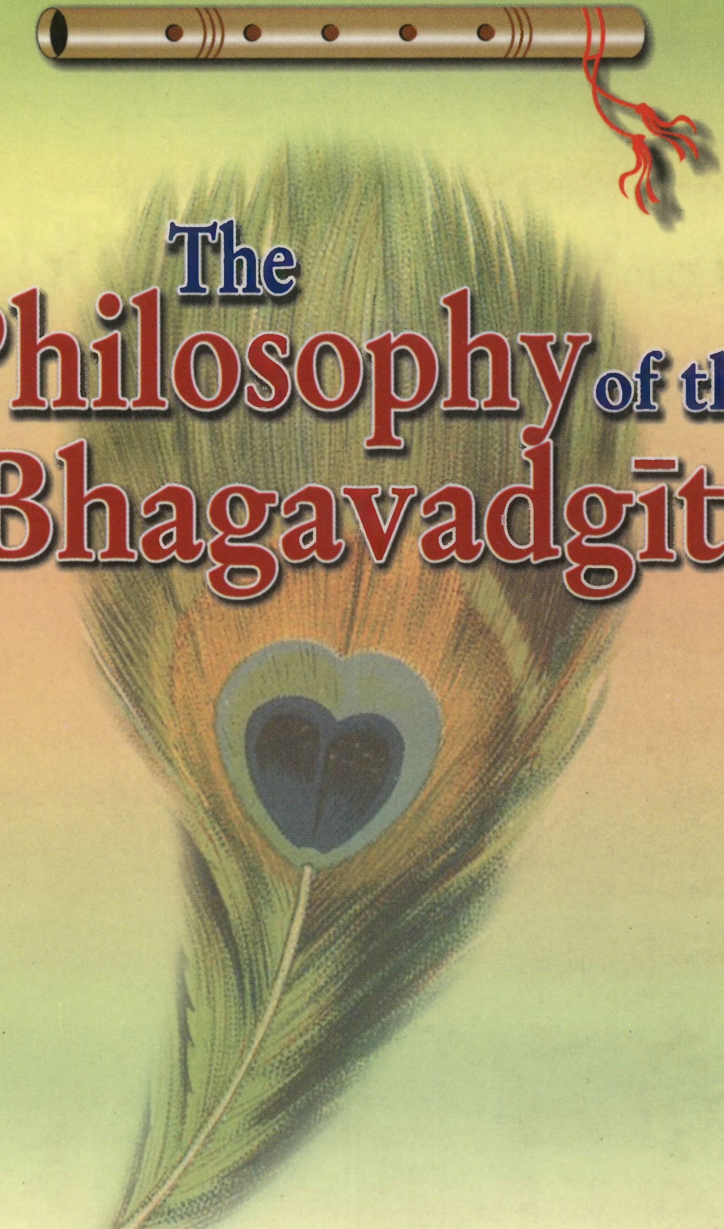
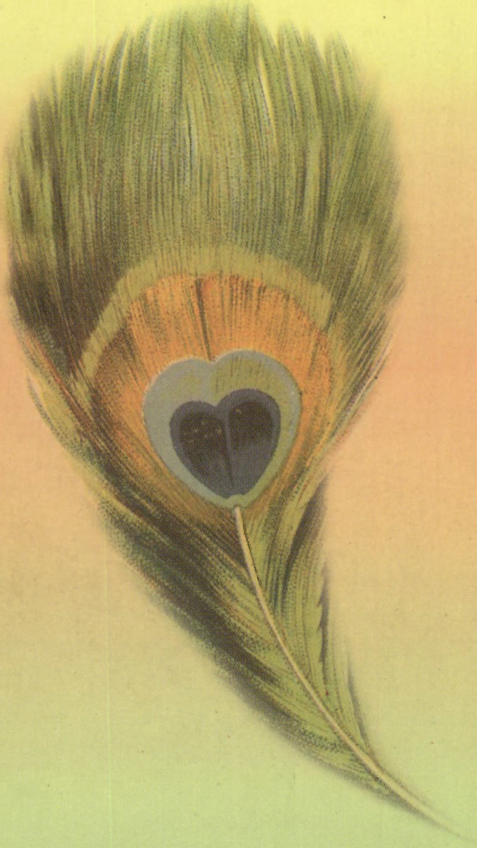


The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgītā

S.M. Srinivasa Chari



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This scholarly work presents a comprehensive and authentic exposition of the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* as enshrined in the original text by according due consideration to the commentaries of Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. In the first part of the book, Dr. Chari makes an indepth study of the selected verses from each *adhyāya* and discusses their philosophical implications with particular reference to the Vedānta doctrines and connected issues advanced by the commentators while interpreting the crucial verses. This analytical and comparative study helps to understand how some of the basic tenets of Vedānta embedded in the *Gītā* are explained differently by the commentators and also to assess the extent to which these are actually reflected in the original text. In the second part, the author has attempted to consolidate the various philosophical, theological and ethical ideas scattered all over the *Gītā* and reconstruct them into coherent doctrines under three broad headings: *Tattvas* covering *Paramātman, jīvātman* and *jagat, sādhana* comprising *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga,* and *parama-puruṣārtha.* In the final chapter, Dr. Chari examines dispassionately the views of the commentators on these theories and comes to the conclusion with sufficient textual authority that some of the tenets of Śaṁkara and also Madhva do not fully conform to the teachings of the *Gītā.* This book, which is the first of its kind, throws new light on the philosophy of the *Gītā.*

S.M. Srinivasa Chari is a Vedānta scholar trained up by eminent traditional teachers. He did his Ph.D. from University of Madras. His other published works are: *Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita*—A study based on Vedānta Deśika's *Śatadūṣaṇī; Fundamentals of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta*—A study based on Vedānta Deśika's *Tattva-muktā-kalāpa; Vaiṣṇavism—Its Philosophy, Theology and Religious Discipline; Philosophy and Theistic Mysticism of the Ālvārs; The Philosophy of the Vedāntasūtra;* and *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*—A study based on the Evaluation of the Commentaries of Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva.

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The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgītā

A Study based on the Evaluation of the Commentaries of Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva

S.M. Srinivasa Chari

with a foreword by

MM. V. Srivatsankacharya

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To the
revered memory of
my ācārya,
Śrī Gostipuram Sowmyanārāyaṇācārya Swāmī
with profound respect and gratitude

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Foreword

THE *Bhagavadgītā* is universally acclaimed as the greatest religious classic. It is of special importance to the Vedāntins as it contains lofty philosophical theories taught directly by Lord Kṛṣṇa dealing with *tattva* or the ultimate Reality, *hita* or the means of its attainment and *puruṣārtha* or the Supreme Spiritual Goal. All the great Ācāryas have accepted the *Gītā* as the basic sourcebook of Vedānta. They have also written scholarly commentaries on it. According to tradition, prior to Rāmānuja, there were ninety-five commentaries on the *Gītā*, the Rāmānuja-bhāṣya being regarded as the ninety-sixth. There is also close affinity in respect of the philosophical teachings of the *Gītā* and *Brahmasūtras*. All the exponents of Vedānta have therefore sought support from the *Gītā* for the doctrines advanced by them.

Among the extant commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā*, the bhāṣyas of Śaṁkarācārya, Rāmānujācārya and Madhvācārya stand out eminently. Though the three Ācāryas maintain divergent views regarding some of the main tenets of Vedānta such as the nature of *Paramātman* (*para tattva*), the nature of the individual self (*jīvātman*)., the relation of *jīvātman* to *Paramātman* in terms of non-difference (*abheda*) and difference (*bheda*), the nature of the Supreme Goal and the nature of the direct means to *mokṣa*, they generally agree with regard to the central theme of the *Gītā* viz., that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Being (*para tattva*) and that He is to be sought as the Supreme Goal.

When we come to the details of the doctrines, we find wide differences in the views advanced by the commentators while interpreting the crucial verses. Throughout the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa is conceived as the Supreme Being (*para tattva*) and there is no higher Reality than Him. He is regarded as *parama-brahma*,· as the sole cause of the creation and dissolution of the universe and also the supporter of it (*ādhāra*). But Śaṁkara, while interpreting a few verses, brings up the theory of two forms of Brahman as *para* or higher, devoid of all determinations (*nirguṇa*) and *apara* or lower Brahman, associated with *māyā* and endowed with attributes (*saguṇa*). No where in the *Gītā* there is any mention of *Nirguṇa* Brahman or Brahman conditioned by *māyā*.

Regarding the *jīvātman*, the *Gītā* explicitly states that it is eternal (*nitya*) and also different from *Paramātman*. It also accepts the plurality of the *jīvas* (*jīva-bahutva*). But Śaṁkara advances the theory of identity of *jīva* and Brahman and explains the plurality of *jīvas* on the basis of one Brahman being conditioned by the limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*) in the form of several *antaḥkaraṇas* caused by *māyā*. But there is no support in the *Gītā* for the doctrine of *māyā* as conceived by Śaṁkara nor for the theory that *jīvas* are conditioned selves. Right from the beginning to the end, the *Gītā* acknowledges the difference between *jīva* and *Paramātman*. The term *sādharmya* used to describe the status of *jīva* in the state of *mokṣa* implies the difference between *jīva* and *Paramātman* even after it is liberated from bondage. The observance of *bhakti-yoga* as the means of attainment of *Paramātman* necessarily presupposes the difference between the *jīva* as the *upāsaka* and *Paramātman* as the object of attainment (*upāsya*). The verse which describes *Paramātman* as the *uttama-puruṣa*, since He transcends both *kṣara-puruṣa* and *akṣara-puruṣa*, clearly acknowledges the difference between the *jīvas* and *Paramātman*.

The subject of *sādhana* constitutes the central doctrine of the *Gītā*. From the teachings contained in the eleventh *adhyāya*, it is obvious that *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* is the sole means of attaining *Paramātman* (*bhaktyā tu ananyayā śakyaḥ*). But Śaṁkara, however, advances the theory that *jñāna* is the sole means to *mokṣa* (*kevalādeva tattva-jñānāt mokṣa prāptiḥ*). If we go by the order in which the teaching about *sādhana* is presented, the *Gītā* in *adhyāyas* II-VI advocates the observance of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*. In the *adhyāya* VII it introduces *bhakti-yoga* as the means to attain *Paramātman*. Thus it follows that according to the *Gītā*, *bhakti-yoga* as aided by *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* is the direct means to *mokṣa*. Recognizing this fact, Rāmānuja states at the very outset of his *Gītā-bhāṣya*, that Lord Kṛṣṇa under the pretext of persuading Arjuna to fight the war, introduced *bhakti-yoga*, as aided by *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, which is enjoined in the Upaniṣads as the direct means to the Supreme Goal (*pāṇḍutanaya yuddha protsāhana vyājena parama-puruṣārtha lakṣaṇa sādhanatayā vedāntoditam svaviṣayam jñāna-*

karmānugṛhītam bhakti-yogam avatārayāmāsa).

Even Bhāskara and Yādava Prakāśa, who came after Śaṁkara, acknowledge that *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are aids to *bhakti-yoga.* But Śaṁkara alters this order and advances the view that *jñāna-yoga* is the sole means to *mokṣa* and that *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* leads to *jñāna* in the sense of direct realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman (*ātmaikya-jñāna*). Madhva also does not admit that *jñāna-yoga* taught in the VIth *adhyāya* is an aid to *bhakti-yoga.* According to him, *jñāna-yoga* which is also named as *dhyāna-yoga* and *samādhi-yoga,* is not different from *bhakti-yoga* outlined in *adhyāyas* IX-XII. The same *dhyāna-yoga* pursued with *bhakti* or undivided devotion to *Paramātman* is regarded as *bhakti-yoga* leading to *aparokṣa-jñāna* or direct perception of *Paramātman* by means of which *mokṣa* is attained.

There are several such important points relating to *tattvas, sādhana* and *puruṣārtha* on which the commentators hold divergent views. Only a dispassionate study of the *Bhagavadgītā* along with the views of Bādarāyaṇa as expressed in the *Vedāntasūtras* and the Upaniṣads, would reveal the correct position regarding the philosophical theories enunciated in the *Gītā.* Though there are innumerable books written in English on the *Gītā* most of which follow the commentary of Śaṁkara, there are very few authoritative works attempting to present a comprehensive account of the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* based on an objective evaluation of the views of the three commentators.

It is highly commendable that Dr. S.M. Srinivasa Chari, who is a distinguished scholar, has undertaken an in-depth study of the *Gītā* by examining dispassionately all the three bhāṣyas. In the first part of the book, he has judiciously selected the verses from each *adhyāya* bearing on the Vedānta doctrines and discussed their philosophical significance with reference to the divergent views advanced by the commentators. In the second part, he has attempted to consolidate the various thoughts scattered all over the *Gītā* and reconstruct them into coherent doctrines under the broad headings viz., *tattvas, sādhana* and *parama-puruṣārtha.* As one well trained by eminent traditional Ācāryas and with his knowledge of the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtras,* as evidenced by his two scholarly books on this subject, he has ably presented an authentic and comprehensive exposition of the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā.* This is undoubtedly an authoritative and scholarly work written for the first time in English. It will definitely throw new light on the philosophy of the *Gītā* and will be very useful for a comparative study of Vedānta.

MM. V. SRIVATSANKACHARYA

Visiting Professor
French Institute of Indology, Pondicherry
Formerly Principal
Madras Sanskrit College, Chennai

Preface

THE *Bhagavadgītā* is acknowledged by all Vedāntins as one of the three sourcebooks of the Vedānta system of philosophy, the other two being the Upaniṣads and the *Brahmasūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa. It is accepted as a philosophical work devoted primarily to teach the fundamental doctrines of Vedānta viz., *tattva* or the ultimate Reality. *Sādhana* or the means of its realization and *puruṣārtha* or the Supreme Goal. My earlier books on the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra* based on an objective evaluation of the comments of Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva have attempted to show that the main tenets of Advaita Vedānta are not reflected in these two basic sourcebooks. The present work attempts to make a similar study of the *Bhagavadgītā*, with a view to determine the nature of the philosophical doctrines adumbrated in the verses of the *Gītā*.

There is extensive literature on the *Bhagavadgītā* contributed by eminent scholars both in India and abroad. Most of these are in the form of translations into English and other languages with notes, while some are expository. The present work is not intended to duplicate this kind of effort. Its scope is restricted to discuss selected verses of the *Gītā* having a bearing on the philosophical theories, by according due consideration to the views of the three principal commentators as well as the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra* and present a consolidated and comprehensive exposition of the philosophy of the *Gītā*. It is hoped that this book which is the first of its kind will throw new light on the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

In the preparation of this book, I have drawn material mostly from the original texts—the three basic commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā* by Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva, along with the *Tātparya-candrikā* of Vedānta Deśika (commentary on Rāmānuja-bhāṣya), *Gītā-tātparya* of Madhvācārya and *Prameya-dīpika* of Jayatīrtha (commentary on Madhva-bhāṣya). In the matter of rendering of the verses into English and explaining their significance in accordance with the respective schools of Vedānta, I have made use of the following books: Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā,* Swāmī Ādidevānanda, *Rāmānuja Gītā-bhāṣya* and Dr. B.N.K. Sharma, *The Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya* of Madhvācārya. I acknowledge my indebtedness to these authors.

I must pay my respects to my revered Ācārya, the late Gostipuram Sowmyanārāyaṇācārya Swāmī to whom I owe my knowledge of Vedānta. I must also pay my respects to the late Śrī Puttankottai Srinivasacharya Swāmī and Śrī Saragur Varadacharya Swāmī under whom I studied the *Gītā-bhāṣya* in the traditional style. I have derived help and guidance for understanding the crucial verses of the *Gītā* from the traditional scholars, Śrī K.S. Varadacharya, Śrī N.S. Rāmānuja Tatacharya, Śrī K.T. Pandurangi and Śrī A. Haridasa Bhatta. I should also thank Dr. N.S. Anantharangachar, the late Śrī S.M. Krishnamachar, Śrī S.K. Ramachandra Rao, and Śrī S. Srinivasachar, who have gone through the major part of the typescript and offered suggestions for improvement. My thanks are also due to all those who have helped me in one way or the other and in particular, to my wife and other family members without whose loving cooperation I would not have completed this book in my advanced age. I also express my grateful thanks to the eminent Sanskrit scholar, Śrī Srivatsankacharya for writing a Foreword to this book.

S.M. SRINIVASA CHARI

Bangalore
21 November 2004

Abbreviations

acc.	according
BG	*Bhagavadgītā*
Bṛ. Up.	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
Ch. Up.	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
Kaṭha Up.	*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*
M.	Madhva
MB	Madhva-bhāṣya
Mbh.	*Mahābhārata*
Mu. Up.	*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*
R	Rāmānuja
RB	Rāmānuja-bhāṣya
S	Śaṁkara
ŚB	Śaṁkara-bhāṣya
Sub. Up.	*Subāla Upaniṣad*
Tait. Up.	*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*
Up.	Upaniṣad
TC	*Tātparya-candrikā* of Vedānta Deśika on *BG*
VP	*Viṣṇupurāṇa*
VS	*Vedāntasūtra*

Introduction

THE *Bhagavadgītā*, popularly known as *Gītā* or the "Divine Song," is universally acclaimed as a distinctive religious classic. Its teachings have attracted the attention of many people across the world. Though it constitutes a part of the *Mahābhārata*, the celebrated Hindu epic compiled by sage Vedavyāsa, it enjoys the status of an independent philosophical treatise. In fact the *Gītā* is one of the three basic sourcebooks for the Vedānta system of philosophy, the other two being the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa. The Upaniṣads which are regarded as Vedānta, being the culminating part of the Vedas, contain the lofty philosophical teachings. The *Vedāntasūtra* codifies these teachings in the form of cryptic aphorisms. The *Bhagavadgītā* elucidates the same teachings in the form of a versified dialogue between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. While the Upaniṣads as part of the Vedas enjoy the status of the Revealed Scripture (*śruti*), the *Vedāntasūtra* and the *Gītā* are accorded the status of *smṛti* or that which is based on *śruti* and also that which elucidates what is taught in the Vedas.

According to the traditional exponents of Vedānta, there is perfect conformity between the three works. The *Gītā* itself in one of its verses mentions that the *Brahmasūtras* determine the purport of the crucial Upaniṣadic texts by adopting logical arguments.[1] It also refers in a number of places to the Upaniṣadic texts.[2] Bādarāyaṇa often refers to the *Gītā* as *smṛti* text in support of the theories advanced in the *Vedāntasūtra*.[3] According to the traditional view, the same Vyāsa who is the compiler of *Mahābhārata* in which the *Bhagavadgītā* is included, is also the author of the *Vedāntasūtra*. A popular verse extolling the greatness of the *Bhagavadgītā* compares the Upaniṣads to the cow, the *Gītā* to the milk drawn from it by the cowherd Gopāla (Kṛṣṇa), Arjuna to the calf and the men of wisdom to those who savour the nectar of the *Gītā*.[4]

Of the three basic classics of the Vedānta, tradition accords greater importance to the *Bhagavadgītā* since the teachings contained in it are imparted directly by Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna. As the colophon at the end of each *adhyāya* indicates, it is called Upaniṣad, since it derives its thoughts from the Upaniṣads. It is regarded as *brahma-vidyā,* since it is a treatise imparting the knowledge of Brahman. It is also characterized as *yoga-śāstra,* since it expounds in detail the *sādhana* to be pursued for attaining the Supreme Being.[5]

According to the commonly accepted view, the *Gītā* comprises 700 verses. However, one of the editions, which is claimed to belong to pre-Śaṁkara times, puts it as 745 verses. But on careful scrutiny it is found that the additional verses do not add anything new to what is mentioned in the other editions. Śaṁkara explicitly states in his *bhāṣya* on the *Gītā* that Vedavyāsa compiled the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in 700 verses.[6] This view is endorsed both by Rāmānuja and Madhva.

The *Gītā* is divided into 18 *adhyāyas* or chapters. Each deals with a major topic or theme as indicated in the colophon. The 18 *adhyāyas* are further subdivided into three parts known as *ṣaṭkas* or hexads, each one covering six *adhyāyas.* As will be seen in the next chapter, there is no unanimity among the commentators regarding the subject-matter of each *adhyāya* and also of the hexads.

Regarding the central theme of the *Bhagavadgītā,* there is some difference of opinion among the three principal commentators. According to Śaṁkara, the main objective of the *Gītā-śāstra,* as explained in the preface to his *bhāṣya,* is to teach the *pravṛtti-dharma* and *nivṛtti-dharma,* which is the means to the attainment of the Supreme Spiritual Goal. *Pravṛtti-dharma* means for Śaṁkara, the performance of the prescribed Vedic deeds by dedicating them to the Supreme Being without any desire for fruits.The *nivṛtti-dharma* involves renunciation of all deeds (*karma*). The former secures purity of the mind (*sattva-śuddhi*) and the steadfastness in the knowledge of *ātman* (*jñāna-niṣṭhatā*), which in turn serves as the direct means to the final liberation. Thus, the central theme of the *Gītā-śāstra* is to teach the ways and means of attaining liberation from bondage, which is the Supreme Spiritual Goal (*parama-niśreyas*).

According to Rāmānuja, the main theme of the *Gītā-śāstra* is the advocacy of *bhakti-yoga* as the direct means to the Supreme Goal. In a characteristic way, he states in the preface to his *Gītā-bhāṣya,* that Lord Kṛṣṇa, under the pretext of persuading Arjuna to fight the war, introduced *bhakti-yoga*, as aided by *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, which is enjoined in the Upaniṣads as the direct means to the Supreme Goal.[7]

Madhva, in his preface to the *Gītā-bhāṣya*, emphasises the importance of the *Mahābhārata* as a work presented by Vyāsa, who is himself an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and who taught the path of duty and knowledge for the benefit of deserving individuals who had lost sight of *nivṛtti-dharma* and *jñāna*. Into such a work, he included the *Gītā* in the form of a dialogue between Vāsudeva and Arjuna epitomising the message of the whole epic. The *Gītā*, which contains the essence of the entire *Mahābhārata*, is helpful to overcome bondage and attain the Supreme Being.

Though there are differences in the matter of details regarding the main objective of the *Gītā-śāstra*, it is agreed by all the commentators that the teachings of the *Gītā* are primarily directed towards the *sādhana* or the means of the attainment of the Supreme Goal. In other words, the main theme of the *Gītā* is *sādhana* for *mokṣa* or liberation from bondage.

As a philosophical treatise constituting the basic sourcebook of Vedānta, it also deals with the other two important doctrines of Vedānta viz., *tattva* or the Ultimate Reality and *puruṣārtha* or the Supreme Goal. As allied to the doctrine of *tattva*, the *Gītā* covers the theories of *jīvātman* and the cosmic universe (*jagat*). As related to the *sādhana*, it also deals extensively with ethical and religious pre-requisites.

While the commentators generally agree with regard to the broad subject-matter covered in the *Bhagavadgītā*, they widely differ with regard to the nature of the doctrines. These differences can be conspicuously noticed in respect of the *sādhana* prescribed for the attainment of the Supreme Goal, which is the central theme of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* refers to *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* also known as *dhyāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* as the means to *mokṣa*. While *adhyāyas* II-VI primarily deal with *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, the *adhyāyas* VII-XII are devoted to the teaching of the *bhakti-yoga*. An important issue which arises in this regard is: of these prescribed pathways, which one is the principal means and which one is the subordinate means. According to Śaṁkara, *jñāna-yoga* understood as the direct realisation of the true nature of the Self (*ātman*) which is the same as Brahman, is the direct means to *mokṣa*. Rāmānuja considers that the *bhakti-yoga* or the unceasing loving meditation on the

Paramātman as enunciated in the *adhyāyas* VII-XII is the direct means to *mokṣa*, whereas *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* understood as the realization of the true nature of the *jīvātman* (*jīvātma-sākṣātkāra*) are subsidiary means (*aṅga*) to *bhakti-yoga*. Madhva advances a different view. The *karma-yoga* understood as the performance of the prescribed *karmas* or deeds without any desire for the results (*niṣkāma karmānuṣṭhāna*) along with *jñāna* or the knowledge of the true nature of the *jīvātman* and the *Paramātman* leads to *bhakti-yoga* which is termed as *Paramātma-dhyāna* or meditation on *Paramātman*. Such a *dhyāna* secures for the *upāsaka* the vision of God (*aparokṣa jñāna*) and this serves as the direct means to *mokṣa*.

Another important theory on which the commentators widely differ is about the nature of the *jīvātman* in relation to *Paramātman*. In the second *adhyāya*, the *Gītā* teaches the nature of *jīvātman* as distinct from the perishable physical body. It also describes in the later *adhyāyas* about the nature of *Paramātman* who is conceived as Lord Kṛṣṇa, also named as Vāsudeva, and who is the creator, protector and controller of the universe. An important issue which arises in this connection is: whether *Paramātman* referred to in the *Gītā* is the *Para* Brahman of the Upaniṣads or is he the *Apara* Brahman, or Brahman associated with *māyā*, as conceived by Śaṁkara. According to Rāmānuja and Madhva, the *Paramātman* referred to in the *Gītā* is the same *Para* Brahman of the Upaniṣads, whereas for Śaṁkara, the theistic God in the name of Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva is the lower Brahman (*apara brahma*).

More importantly, the relation of *jīvātman* to *Paramātman* has assumed great controversy. The issue which is raised in this regard is: whether *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* (Brahman) are two distinct real ontological entities or whether *jīva* is essentially the same as Brahman. Śaṁkara maintains the latter view, whereas Rāmānuja and Madhva subscribe to the former.

The theory of the cosmic universe has received considerable attention in the *Gītā*. It is described as *aparā prakṛti* of the Lord, signifying its intimate relationship with the Supreme Being who is the source (*yoni*) of it. It is constituted of three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The question that arises in this connection is whether the universe as evolved out of the primordial cosmic matter by the will (*saṁkalpa*) of *Īśvara* is real or phenomenal in character caused by *māyā*. For Śaṁkara, the universe is illusory, whereas for Rāmānuja and Madhva it is real and also distinct from Brahman.

There are other important theories on which the commentators differ in their opinion. These differences arise mainly due to the variation in the interpretation of the relevant *Gītā* verses in accordance with the metaphysical stand adopted by them. Another reason for this variation is that there is some ambiguity in the terms used in the crucial verses which allow for more than one meaning. Besides, the commentators are often confronted with apparently conflicting teachings. These need to be reconciled and in this effort, they resort to an explanation on the basis of certain accepted premises. This is a common feature of all the scholarly bhāṣyas and *vṛttis* contributed by the commentators on the original treatise not only in the area of Vedānta but also other Darśanas such as Nyāya, Mīmāṁsā, etc.

As compared to the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra*, the *Gītā* which is in the form of simple verses is rich with profound metaphysical, religious and ethical thoughts. It is no wonder that it is commented upon by a large number of eminent traditional Ācāryas. Several modern scholars, both European and Indian, have also attempted to interpret it in their own way. Among the exponents of the schools of Vedānta, Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva are regarded as the principal commentators, since each has presented a distinctive view of the philosophy of the *Gītā*. Śaṁkara who is the earliest among the extant commentators (AD 780-820) has attempted to interpret the main philosophical teachings in accordance with the doctrines of Advaita Vedānta. Rāmānuja (AD 1017-1137) who is the next important commentator, interprets these from the standpoint of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. Madhva (AD 1199-1278) explains the theories in accordance with the doctrines of Dvaita Vedānta.

The Śaṁkara-bhāṣya is further commented upon by Ānandagiri, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Śaṅkarānanda, Śrīdhara, Sadānanda and Nīlakaṇṭha. We have on Rāmānuja-bhāṣya, an elaborate commentary under the title of *Tātparya-candrikā* contributed by Vedānta Deśika (AD 1268), an illustrious successor of Rāmānuja. Earlier than Rāmānuja, Yamunā wrote a work named *Gītārtha-saṁgraha*, which epitomises the entire *Gītā* teachings in 32 verses. Rāmānuja has closely followed this work in writing his *Gītā-bhāṣya*. Vedānta Deśika has written a commentary on it in the name of *Gītārtha-saṁgraha-rakṣā*. This sets out in clear terms the true purport of the *Gītā*. Madhva's *Gītā-bhāṣya* which is very brief, as compared to that of

Rāmānuja and Śaṁkara, is commented on by his illustrious follower, Jayatīrtha under the title of *Prameya-dīpikā.* This is very useful for understanding the thoughts of Madhva. There is also another commentary on the *Gītā* by Rāghavendratīrtha under the title *Gītā-vivṛti.* Madhva has also written an independent work named as *Gītā-tātparya,* which elucidates the points made in the bhāṣya in greater detail with supporting *smṛti* texts.

There is one other independent commentary on the *Gītā* under the title of *Paiśāca-bhāṣya,* whose author is claimed to be Hanumān, the monkey-god. As this bhāṣya closely follows the views of Śaṁkara, it is likely that it is written by someone under the name of Hanumān at a period much later than Śaṁkara.

Another bhāṣya bearing the title of *Brahmānandagiri-vyākhyā* is written by Veṅkaṭanātha, who is stated to have flourished after Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in the seventeenth century. He critically examines the views of Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva and presents his own view, though he leans heavily on Advaita Vedānta.

Among the commentaries written by the followers of other schools of Vedānta such as Nimbārka, Vallabha and Caitanya, the following may be mentioned. Nimbārka (AD 1162) who represents the school of Dvaita-Advaita or Bheda-Abheda, has not written any commentary on the *Gītā.* But his disciple Keśava Kashmirin (AD 1510) has written a commentary named as *Tattva-prakāśikā* in accordance with the teachings of Nimbārka. He generally follows the views of Rāmānuja.

Vallabha (AD 1479) who represents the Śuddhādvaitavāda, has also not written any bhāṣya on the *Gītā.* His views on the *Gītā* are expressed in his *Tattva-dīpika.* But two of his descendants bearing the names as Vallabha and Puruṣottama (AD 1668-1784) have written commentaries under the title *Tattva-dīpikā-ṭīkā* and *Amṛta-taraṅgiṇī* respectively. He has generally adopted the views of Madhva.

The followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu do not seem to have written any commentary in Sanskrit on the *Bhagavadgītā,* although they have accepted it as an authoritative sourcebook along with *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* for the development of Caitanya school of Vaiṣṇavism which advocates the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Being. In recent years, one of his followers, A.C. Bkaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupada, the founder of Kṛṣṇa-conciousness movement, has written a commentary in English under the title *Bhagavadgītā—As it is.* His views conform to a large extent to the teachings of Rāmānuja.

A few other later commentaries appearing subsequent to Rāmānuja and Madhva have followed either of these two bhāṣyas with certain modifications to fit their own set doctrines. For the purpose of comparative and critical study of the philosophy enunciated in the *Bhagavadgītā*, we have to take into consideration the bhāṣyas of the three principal commentators, Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. But the views of the Ācāryas on some of the major Vedānta doctrines adumbrated in the *Gītā* differ. It therefore becomes necessary to make an unbiased study of the *Gītā* without being unduly influenced by the views of any particular commentator, in order to understand the philosophy of the *Gītā*, as enshrined in the original text. This is the task which is undertaken in the present work.

In this study, we shall not deal with every verse of the *Gītā* along with the respective bhāṣyas. There are a large number of good English translations of the *Gītā* and also the bhāṣyas of the three Ācāryas. We are also not interested in the discussion of the views of the indologists and the interpretation of the *Gītā* by some modern scholars emphasising the ethical and social values in the context of modern society. Nor do we attempt to present an exposition of the teachings of the *Gītā* in accordance with any particular school of Vedānta since this task has been amply acomplished by several scholarly works. We are primarily concerned with philosophical substance of the work as we find it. The scope of the book is therefore confined to the discussion of the fundamental philosophical doctrines enunciated in the *Gītā* by according due consideration to the views of Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. For this purpose we shall first present in part I, the selected verses of each *adhyāya* bearing on the philosophical theories along with English rendering and notes explaining the interpretational differences of the commentators, wherever they exist, with particular reference to the issues related to the doctrines. We shall also attempt to evaluate objectively the views of the commentators on the basis of the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the authoritative views of Bādarāyaṇa as enshrined in the *Vedāntasūtra*. According to the traditional Vedāntins, the philosophical teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* should conform to those in the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra*.

In part II, we shall attempt to present a consolidated and comprehensive exposition of the philosophical doctrines as adumbrated in the *Bhagavadgītā*. This is the first time that such an attempt is being made to present in English an authentic exposition of the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* on the basis of an objective evaluation of the comments of Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. It is hoped that this book would throw new light on the philosophy of the *Gītā*.

REFERENCES

1. *BG*, XIII.4, *Brahmasūtrapadaiś cai'va hetumadbhiḥ viniścitaiḥ.*
2. Ibid., II.20; cf., *Kaṭha Up.*, I.2.18 and 19.
3. *Vedāntasūtra* (hereinafter cited as *VS*) I.2.6. *Smṛteśca,* IV.1.10. *Smaranti ca.*
4. *Gītā-māhātmya: sarvopaniṣado gāvaḥ dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ; pārtho vatsa-sudhīḥ bhoktā dugdham gītāmṛtam mahat.*
5. See the colophon: *iti bhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahma-vidyāyām yoga-śāstre,* etc.
6. See Śaṁkara-bhāṣya on *Bhagavadgītā* (hereinafter cited as ŚB on *BG*). *Tam dharmaṁ bhagavatā yathopadiṣṭām vedavyāsaḥ sarvajño bhagavān gītākhyaiḥ saptaphiḥ śloka-śataiḥ upanibandha.*
7. Rāmānuja-bhāṣya on *Bhagavadgītā* (hereinafter cited as RB on *BG*). *Pāṇḍu-tanaya yoddha protsāhana-vyājena paramapuruṣārtha-lakṣaṇasādhanatayā vedāntoditam svaviṣayam jñāna-karmānugṛhītam bhaktiyogam avatārayāmāsa.*

PART I

The Philosophical Teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā*

IN this part we shall present the important philosophical teachings contained in the *Gītā*. As a book of 700 simple and meaningful poems in the form of a dialogue between Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the teacher and Arjuna as his devoted disciple, we do not find in it a well-knit system of philosophy as such with fully developed doctrines presented in a sequential order. The teachings which cover a variety of topics—metaphysical, theological, ethical and allied matters—are spread all over the eighteen *adhyāyas*. These have to be brought together and reconstructed into a co-ordinated system. Before we make this attempt, it is considered necessary to understand these teachings as they are found in the text and also how these are interpreted by the three principal commentators Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva.

Each *adhyāya* deals with a broad subject-matter. On the basis of the titles generally acknowledged by the commentators, the eighteen *adhyāyas* cover the following subjects:

1. *Arjuna-viṣāda-yoga* or the dejection of Arjuna leading to his spiritual enlightenment.
2. *Sāṁkya-yoga* or the theory of the *ātman* and the theory of *yoga*.
3. *Karma-yoga* or the theory of disinterested performance of prescribed deeds.
4. *Jñāna-karma-saṁnyāsa-yoga* or the theory of *karma-yoga* and its relation to *jñāna-yoga*.
5. *Saṁnyāsa-yoga* or the theory of renunciation of *karmas*.
6. *Dhyāna-yoga* or the theory of meditation on *ātman*.
7. *Jñāna-vijñāna-yoga* or the theory of *Paramātman*.
8. *Akṣara-brahma-yoga* or the meditation on *Akṣara-brahma*.
9. *Rāja-vidyā-rāja-guhya-yoga* or the theory of the Supreme Being and the nature of *bhakti-yoga*.
10. *Vibhūti-yoga* or the theory of God and His glory.
11. *Viśvarūpa-darśana-yoga* or the vision of the cosmic form of God.
12. *Bhakti-yoga* or the unswerving meditation on God as the means

to the Supreme Goal.
13. *Kṣetra-kṣetrajña-vibhāga-yoga* or the theory of the distinctive nature of the body and the self.
14. *Guṇatraya-vibhāga-yoga* or the theory of the differentiation of the three *guṇas.*
15. *Puruṣottama-yoga* or the theory of the Supreme Person.
16. *Daivāsurasampad-vibhāga-yoga* or the theory of the nature of the divine and demoniac beings.
17. *Śraddhātraya-vibhāga-yoga* or the nature of the threefold characteristic of faith.
18. *Mokṣa-saṁnyāsa-yoga* or the theory of liberation through renunciation.

These are the titles given to each of the *adhyāyas* to indicate the broad theme dealt in them. The contents of the *adhyāya* are not strictly confined to the subject of the title but they cover many other allied matters. As we shall presently see, the topics covered in each *adhyāya* are varied, though they are related directly or indirectly to the three major doctrines viz. *tattva, sādhana* and *puruṣārtha.*

We shall take up each *adhyāya* separately. As we are primarily interested in the discussion of the major philosophical doctrines of the Vedānta, we shall confine our attention to the consideration of the selected verses from each *adhyāya* bearing on the doctrines. The verses are presented in Sanskrit (in Roman script) along with English rendering and explanatory notes indicating the variation in the interpretation by the commentators with special reference to the philosophical issues connected with the theory. We shall also attempt to evaluate the views of the commentators on the basis of the Upaniṣadic teachings and the authoritative views of Bādarāyaṇa enshrined in the *Vedāntasūtra.* This will enable us to present the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* as found in the original text, without being unduly influenced by the views of any particular school of Vedānta.

CHAPTER 1

The Despondency of Arjuna and the Initiation of the *Gītā*

THE first *adhyāya,* which is titled *Arjuna-viṣāda-yoga,* covers this subject. It refers to the moral crisis of Arjuna, which serves as a prelude to the initiation of the *Gītā-śāstra.* The verses of this *adhyāya* and also the vv. 1-10 of the second *adhyāya* describe vividly how Arjuna, confronting on the battlefield his own preceptors, venerable elders, his cousins and friends is overpowered with deep compassion and grief at the thought of having to kill them. Being dejected and also confused with regard to what is right and wrong, Arjuna refuses to fight. He implores Lord Kṛṣṇa to enlighten him as to what is considered to be good for him.

Thus says the *Gītā*:

kārpaṇya-doṣopahata svabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṁ dharmasaṁmūḍha-cetāḥ;
yacchreyaḥ syān-niścitam brūhi tan-me siṣyastehaṁ śādhi māṁ tvām prapannām. II.7
With my heart stricken with compassion with my mind bewildered about my duty, I request you to tell me what you judge to be good. I am your disciple. I have surrendered to you. Pray, teach me.

This situation is utilized by Lord Kṛṣṇa as a pretext (*vyāja*) to impart the entire philosophy of the *Gītā* for the benefit of the mankind. This point is well brought out by Yāmuna in a single verse which sums up the contents of the first *adhyāya.*

asthāne-snehakāruṇya dharmādharma dhiyākulam;
pārthaṁ prapannam-uddiśya śāstrāvataraṇam kṛtam.
The *Gītā-śāstra* was initiated by making Arjuna as the media, who was overpowered by misplaced love and compassion and also confused as to what is *dharma* and what is *adharma,* and who took refuge in Kṛṣṇa.

On the basis of this verse, Rāmānuja states that under the pretext of inducing the son of Pāṇḍu (Arjuna) to fight in the battle, the Lord promulgated *bhakti-yoga* as the direct means to the Supreme Goal. (*pāṇḍu-tanaya yuddha-protsāhanā-vyājena . . . bhakti yogam avatārayāmāsa*).

Madhva also adopts the same view: (*arjunam nimittīkṛtya prāptalokopakārārtham hi bhagavatopadeśaḥ kriyate*). The same view is expressed by Śaṁkara: (*sarva lokānugrahārtham arjunaṁ nimittī-kṛtya āha bhagavān vāsudevaḥ*).

Some commentators, both ancient and modern, have raised a few issues related to the cause of the mental crisis. Is Arjuna an ordinary individual as others, an unenlightened person (*madhyamādhikārī*), subject to the delusion due to the influence of the beginningless *avidyā*, as Śaṁkara believes, or is he a *jñānī* or enlightened person (*uttamādhikārī*), being an incarnation of Indra, but still on occasion subjected to delusion due to the *prārabdha-karma*, as Madhva interprets. These questions are not of significance since it is accepted that Arjuna is made use of as the media for teaching the *Gītā-śāstra* for the benefit of the mankind. The point to be noted is, as Rāmānuja states, that Arjuna is large-hearted (*mahā-manaḥ*) and excessively compassionate (*parama-kāruṇikaḥ*) and he was prepared to extend his kindness even to his enemies, even though they had caused undue hardship to the Pāṇḍavas. Filled with friendly feelings, great compassion arising from attachment to his kith and kin and the fear that he might commit a grave moral lapse by killing them, he felt overpowered with a feeling of despondency. This situation was utilized by Lord Kṛṣṇa to initiate him into the entire *Gītā-śāstra.*

CHAPTER 2

The Theory of *Ātman* and the Theory of *Yoga*

THE second *adhyāya* titled *Sāṁkhya-yoga* is primarily devoted to the presentation of the theory of the *ātman* and the theory of *yoga*. The term *sāṁkhya* in the *Gītā* does not refer to the system of philosophy known by that name. Nor does *yoga* mean Patañjali-Yoga. As will be explained later, *sāṁkhya* means the theory of *ātman* and *yoga* stands for the means to attain it viz., *karma-yoga*.

At the outset, Lord Kṛṣṇa expounds to Arjuna the nature of the self (*ātman*). The knowledge about the true nature of the self is considered essential for removing the delusion that the physical body itself is the self (*dehātma-bhrama*). This delusion leads to the psychological crisis faced by Arjuna. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore repeatedly instructs that the self is distinct from the body and that the former is eternal and indestructible, whereas the latter is non-eternal and perishable. At first, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells that the self is eternal.

> *na tv evā'haṁ jātu nā'saṁ*
> *na tvaṁ ne'me janādhipāḥ*
> *na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ*
> *sarve vayam ataḥ param.* II.12
> Never was a time when I did not exist, nor thou, nor any of these rulers of men. Nor will there ever be a time in future when we all shall cease to be.

This verse as it reads conveys the idea of not only the eternality of the individual self but also its distinction from *Paramātman* or the Supreme Self. By citing the example of *Paramātman*, whose existence in the past, present and future is not in doubt, the eternality of the individual selves is established by the *Gītā*.[1] As Madhva explains, the eternality of God is not disputed since it is well-established in the Vedānta texts.

The verse also implies the difference between the *Paramātman* and the individual selves. According to Rāmānuja, this statement emanates from Lord Kṛṣṇa himself who is not subject to any delusion. Hence the distinction between *Paramātman* and *jīvātman* is to be taken as real.

Another important implication of the verse is that the words *janādhipāḥ* or "rulers" and *sarve vayam* or "all of us" in plural emphasise the plurality of the individual selves as distinct from *Paramātman.*

Śaṁkara offers a different explanation both regarding the eternality of the self and its plurality. According to the metaphysical doctrine adopted by him, *jīva* or the individual self is essentially Brahman. Thus in respect of its *svarūpa* or nature, it is eternal since it has neither a beginning nor an end. *Jīvas* are regarded as many because of the different bodies associated with the *ātman* (*dehabhedānuvṛttyā bahuvacanam na ātmabhedābhiprāyeṇa*). The same one Brahman conditioned by many limiting adjuncts (*upādhis*) in the form of mind and physical body caused by *māyā*, appears to be many similar to the one all-pervasive *ākāśā* (space) appears to be many, when it is conditioned by several receptacles of different sizes.

This explanation is tenable if the doctrine of *māyā* and the theory of identity of *jīva* and Brahman are established. The verse as it reads does not convey these ideas. Nor are there verses which explicitly support these theories. Besides, the *Kaṭha* and *Śvetāśvatara* Upaniṣads mention the eternality and plurality of the *jīvas* (*nityānām bahūnām cetanānām*).[2] The *Vedāntasūtra* also affirms that *ātma* denoting *jīvātman* is *nitya.*[3]

To substantiate the *nityatva* of *ātman,* Lord Kṛṣṇa cites the example of the physical body.

> *dehino'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā*
> *tathā dehāntara prāpatir dhīras tatra na muhyati.* II.13
> As the self associated with a body passes through childhood, youth and old age, so too it passes into another body (after physical death). A wise man is not perplexed by this.

The significance of this verse is that just as an individual who passes through the different states in the body does not think that the self is lost, in the same way if one leaves the present body and enters into another after death, he should not grieve, since the *ātman* is eternal.

The indestructible nature of the self as contrasted to the destructible nature of the body is brought about more explicitly by a few verses.

One of the verses says:

> *nā sato vidyate bhāvo nā bhāvo vidyate sataḥ*
> *ubhayor api dṛṣṭo' ntastu anyayos tattva-darśibhiḥ.* II.16
> Its general meaning is:
> What is *asat* can never come into being and the *sat* never ceases to be. The conclusion about these two is seen by the seers of truth.

This crucial verse is interpreted differently by the commentators. According to Śaṁkara, the terms *sat* and *asat* mean what is existent or real and what is non-existent or unreal respectively. The existent is that which does not change, whereas the non-existent is that which constantly changes. The *sat* denotes the true self or Brahman, which is unchanging, whereas everything other than Brahman is unreal or illusory as they are constantly subject to change.

This verse is construed by Śaṁkara in favour of the theory of the illusory character of the physical objects (*mithyātva*) on the assumption that whatever is constantly changing (*vyāvartamānatvāt*) is not real, whereas *sat* or Brahman which is unchanging is alone real. But in the context of the teaching about the distinction between the imperishable soul and the perishable body, there is no room to bring up the theory of unreality (*asatva*) of the physical body and affirm the reality of the self. Further, epistemologically, an object which is subject to modification or *vikāra*, may be non-eternal but it does not become non-existent in the sense in which Śaṁkara interprets it. When a lump of clay undergoes modification as a pot, it assumes another state. Similarly, when a pot is destroyed, it assumes the changed condition of earthen pieces. On that account, the pot cannot be considered as unreal (*mithyā*).

Madhva offers a radically different explanation. According to him the word *asat* means *prakṛti*, also known as *avyakta*, the primordial cosmic matter which is considered as the material cause of the universe. By reading the first part of the verse as *na asato vidyate abhāvo* (instead of *bhāva*), Madhva contends that *prakṛti* is also an eternal entity like the *jīva*. *Sat* in the verse means Brahman which obviously does not have *abhāva*. In other words, it is eternal. Whatever may be the merit of this explanation, there seems to be no need to prove in this context that besides *jīvātman*, *prakṛti* is also *nitya* or eternal.

Rāmānuja offers a straightforward interpretation. In the context of the teaching of the nature of *jīvātman* as distinct from the body, *asat* in the verse means body (*deha*) and *sat* means *jīva*. The first part of the verse therefore means, according to Rāmānuja, that the body does not have a permanent existence and the *sat* or the self never ceases to exist. In other words, it is the very nature of the body that it is always subject to change (*vināśa-svabhāvaḥ*), whereas the self always remains unchanged (*avināśa svabhāvaḥ*). This explanation is fully supported by the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*.[4] Further, the above meaning for *sat* and *asat* as body and soul respectively, is substantiated by the subsequent two verses which affirm the indestructible character of the *jīva* and perishable nature of the body with sufficient justification.

avināśī tu tad viddhi yena sarvamidam tatam
vināśam avyayasyā'sya na kaścit kartumarhati. II.17
antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ
anāśino' prameyasya tasmād yuddhasya bhārata. II.18
Know that as indestructible by which all this is pervaded. None can cause the destruction of this immutable.
It is said that these bodies of the self have an end, while the self itself is eternal, indestructible and incomprehensible.Therefore O Arjuna, fight.

The first verse provides the justification for regarding *ātman* as *avināśī* or indestructible, on the basis of the fact that the entire material body which is different from it is pervaded by it. The *ātman* by its very nature is immutable being subtle (*sūkṣma*) and hence the possibility of its being destroyed by any gross object is ruled out.

Śaṁkara takes the word *tat* to mean Brahman which is all-pervasive. It is also immutable (*avyayam*) and hence it is not possible to destroy it by anyone, not even by God.

By its very nature, the body is perishable. It is the composite of the five elements and is intended for the *jīva* to experience pleasure and pain, according to one's *karma*. Such bodies perish, as in the case of material objects such as pots. The self which is the knower is always of the same nature and it is indestructible.

This teaching about the distinctive nature of *jīva* and body is made explicit by the following two verses which reiterate the statements of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.[5]

> *ya enam vetti hantāram yaścainam manyate hatam*
> *ubhau tau na vijānīto nā'yam hanti na hanyate.* II.19
> He who thinks that it (the self) is a slayer and he who thinks that it is slain, both of them do not know the truth, for the self neither slays nor is slain.

The implication of the verse is, as Rāmānuja explains, that the self is eternal and nothing can destroy it. It cannot therefore be slain. When a person is killed, only the body is separated from the soul but the soul itself is not destroyed.

> *na jāyate mṛyate vā kadācin nā'yam bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ*
> *ajo nityaḥ śāśvato' yam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.* II.20
> It (the self) is never born nor does it die, nor having (once) come to be, it will again cease to be. It is unborn, eternal, unchanging and primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain.

The significance of this teaching is that birth and death of a person are only association and dissociation of the body with the soul, but these do not affect in any way its true nature. It is therefore regarded as *aja* or unborn, *nitya* or eternal, *śāśvata* or everlasting and *purāṇa* or primeval.

To drive deep these ideas into the mind of Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa repeats them in a different way. He tells him that the casting off one body and assuming another by the soul is like throwing out the worn-out garment and putting on a new garment. The weapons do not cleave the soul, fire does not burn it, water does not make it wet nor does wind make it dry. It is uncleavable, it cannot be burnt, it cannot be wetted and it cannot be dried. It is *nitya* or eternal, *sarvagataḥ* or abiding in all beings, *sthāṇuḥ* or stable, *acalaḥ* or immovable and *sanatanaḥ* or primeval.[6] In a more specific way, He states that the *jīvātman* is unmanifest (*avyakta*), in the sense that it is not comprehensible in the way material objects are known, inconceivable (*acintya)* being different in nature from all objects and *avikārya* or not subject to any modification like the material entities (*avyakto'yam, acintyo'yam avikāryo'am ucyate*).[7]

From these teachings so far outlined about the nature of the *ātman*, it is obvious that the *ātman* referred to here denotes the individual self (*jīvātman*) which is distinct from the perishable physical body. There is no mention in any of these verses that this *ātman* is essentially Brahman and that it is Brahman as conditioned by the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) in the form of body and mind caused by *māyā*, as conceived by Śaṁkara. Nor is there any explicit mention in these verses that *jīvātman* is the *pratibimba* of *Paramātman,* who is the *bimba,* in the technical sense of similarity (*sādṛśya*) in respect of certain characteristics between the two, while *jīva* being dependent on the *Paramātman* (*tadadhīna sārūpya*), as maintained by Madhva. The teaching about *jīvātman* in this *adhyāya* is primarily focussed on the subject of eternality and indestructibility of *jīva,* as contrasted with the non-eternality and perishable character of the physical body, for the purpose of removing the delusion of Arjuna caused by ignorance of the true nature of *jīvātman.* The theory of the relation of *jīva* to *Paramātman* comes up in later *adhyāyas.*[8] It is therefore not relevant to advance in the present context, the doctrine of *abheda* or absolute non-difference between *jīva* and Brahman, as done by Śaṁkara and *bimba-pratibimba* theory, as conceived by Madhva.

Karma-yoga

This is the next important philosophical topic that comes up in the second *adhyāya.* The relevance of teaching this subject after teaching Arjuna about the nature of *jīvātman* needs to be understood. Arjuna was first required to be instructed about the true nature of *ātman* for the purpose of persuading him to fight the war, which is considered to be a *dharma* for a kṣatriya, unmindful of the pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau*
> *tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpam avāpsyasi.* II.38
> Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, get ready for battle. Thus you shall not incur any sin.

After justifying the need to fight the battle both on moral and philosophical ground, Lord Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna the manner of performing one's duty (*karma*). In this context, the theory of *karma-yoga* or the performance of the prescribed deeds is introduced.

The following verse indicates the beginning of the second phase of the teaching.

> *eṣā te abhihitā sāṁkhye*
> *buddhir yoge tv imāṁ śṛṇu*
> *buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha*
> *karma-bandhaṁ prahāsyasi.* II.39

> This knowledge (*buddhi*) concerning the self (*sāṁkhya*) has been imparted to you, O Pārtha (Arjuna), now listen to the knowledge (*buddhi*) with regard to the *yoga*. Being equipped with it, you shall get rid of the bondage caused by *karma* (in the form of *puṇya* and *pāpa*).

The terms *sāṁkhya* and *yoga* in this verse are interpreted differently by the commentators. As pointed out earlier, *sāṁkhya* here does not refer to the Kapila's system of philosophy, nor does *yoga* mean Pātañjala Yoga. The word *sāṁkhya*, according to Vedic *Nighaṇṭu*, means knowledge. Rāmānuja therefore takes the term *sāṁkhya* to mean *ātma-tattva* or the *jīvātman* whose nature is to be determined by intellectual knowledge (*buddhyā avadhāraṇīyam ātmatattvam sāṁkhyam*). The term *yoga* means, according to him, *karma-yoga* or the disinterested performance of prescribed deeds along with the knowledge of the true nature of the self which serves as a means to *mokṣa* (*ātmajñāna-pūrvaka mokṣa-sādhanabhūta karmānuṣṭhāna*). On the basis of these explanations, the present verse, according to Rāmānuja, means that so far the theory of *jīvātman* has been imparted to Arjuna, as contained in vv.II.12-30. What is now going to be instructed is about the knowledge (*buddhi*) related to the *karma-yoga* or the performance of the prescribed deeds which serves as the subsidiary means to *mokṣa*.

Madhva also takes the word *sāṁkhya* to mean knowledge (*jñāna*) about the *ātman* (*śuddhātma-tattva vijñānam*). He quotes a statement from *Vyāsasmṛti* in support of this interpretation.[9] *Ātma-jñāna* implies for Madhva the knowledge of both *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* in their unique relationship of *bimba-pratibimbabhāva*.[10] The word *yoga* means the *upāya* or the means of attaining this *jñāna*.

According to Śaṁkara, *sāṁkhya* means the discriminating knowledge of the Supreme Reality which directly removes the bondage caused by ignorance of the true nature of the Self (*paramārtha-vastu-vivekaviṣaye buddhiḥ jñānam sākṣāt śokamohādi saṁsāra hetudoṣa nivṛtti kāraṇam*). Yoga means the *upāya* or the means of attaining that knowledge of the Reality. In the context of the realization of the Supreme Reality this *yoga*, according to Śaṁkara, refers to *karma-yoga* or the disinterested performance of the prescribed deeds, as compared to *jñāna-yoga* which is regarded as the direct means to the realization of the Supreme Reality. Śaṁkara draws a clear distinction between *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, which are different paths intended for two different categories of persons.

The basis for this view, as will be observed later, is the verse in the third *adhyāya* which says: *jñāna-yogena sāṁkhyānāṁ karma-yogena yogīnām.*[11] That is, *yoga* of knowledge or more appropriately the pathway of knowledge is intended for the men who seek Self-realization and the *yoga* of action or pathway of *karma* is intended for the men of action.

Thus, the three commentators differ in their views regarding the nature and also the role of *jñāna* and *karma* in the spiritual discipline (*sādhana*) laid down by the Vedānta for attaining total liberation from bondage. We shall discuss the relative merits of these views later in the chapter on General Evaluation.

The details about *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are furnished in the subsequent *adhāyayas* (III-VI). The present *adhyāya* describes the manner in which *karma-yoga* is to be observed if it is adopted as the means to liberation from bondage and also the state of steadfastness of knowledge (*sthitaprajñatā*). At first, the *Gītā* draws clear distinction between *karma* or the performance of Vedic rituals for achieving certain results and *karma-yoga* or the disinterested performance of the prescribed deeds as the means to *mokṣa.* Vedic sacrifices are directed to the acquisition of material rewards such as heaven, wealth, etc. These are motivated by a desire for achieving some results. They are therefore regarded as *kāmya-karma. Karma-yoga* refers to the performance of the prescribed deeds and duties by renouncing all selfish desire for rewards and for the sole purpose of attaining the Supreme Spiritual Goal. It is also known as *niṣkāma-karma* or disinterested performance of *karma* without a desire for any reward. Those who observe *kāmya-karmas* seeking certain desired results cannot have one-pointedness of mind directed to the spiritual goal, whereas those who follow *karma-yoga* are resolute as it is directed towards one goal *(vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ)*.

The following verse describes the manner in which the *karma-yoga* is to be observed by those who aspire for *mokṣa* (*mumukṣu*):

> *karmaṇye vādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana*
> *mā karmaphalahetur bhūr ma te saṅgo' stvakarmaṇi.* II.47
>
> You have the right to perform only the deed and never at all to its fruits; do not be motivated by the fruits of the action; nor have any attachment to inaction.

This is an important verse of the *Gītā* which emphasises the ethical idea of the performance of one's duty in the spirit of disinterestedness. Its fuller implications are explained by the commentators differently. Śaṁkara takes this verse as if it is applicable to the persons who follow the path of action (*karma-niṣṭha*) and not to those who follow the path of knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭha*) for the purpose of realization of the self. Accordingly, the first line of the verse is intended to mean that you (Arjuna) have a right for action alone and not for steadfastness in knowledge (*karma niṣṭhāyam eva adhikāraḥ na jñāna niṣṭhāyām te tava*). The second line means: while one is engaged in the *karma*, he has no right for the results under any circumstances. If one desires for the results of action, he will become the agent of acquiring the results of action. He should not therefore become the cause of production of the result. He should also refrain from the thought of not doing an act, on the ground that the result of the work is not desired.

According to Madhva, the pronoun *te* (you) in the verse is not confined merely to Arjuna or persons following the path of action only, as Śaṁkara interprets, but on the contrary, it applies for all those for whom Vedic injunctions are enjoined, including the *jñānīs* or those who have the philosophical knowledge. Arjuna, according to Madhva, is a *jñānī*, being an incarnation of Indra.The implication of the verse is that the performance of the act alone comes under the purview of the Vedic injunction, never the fruits thereof. The desire for the fruits of the action is never to be entertained even by a *jñānī* like Arjuna and much less by others. In other words, one is required to perform one's duty without any expectation of the results of the *karma*. Nor should one remain indifferent towards one's duty on the ground that he is not interested in the results.

Rāmānuja offers a straightforward explanation. A person like Arjuna who is an aspirant for higher spiritual goal has the duty to perform the deeds prescribed in the Vedas, even though they are associated with some result or the other. He has no right to the fruits that may accrue from them. That is, he should refrain forever from developing a desire for the fruits. Acts done with a desire for fruits cause bondage. Acts done without any motivation for results but dedicated to God in the spirit of worship would lead to liberation. While doing his duty, one must cultivate the attitude that he is not the cause of the action and its fruits. One should also not become a prey to the temptation of not doing the duty.

That the *niṣkāma-karma* is helpful to secure liberation from bondage is emphasized by Lord Kṛṣṇa by exhorting Arjuna to perform the duty of fighting the war with a sense of equanimity unmindful of the success or failure and abandoning all attachment. Thus says Kṛṣṇa:

> *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya*
> *siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate.* II.48
> Abandoning attachment and established in yoga (*yogasthaḥ*), do your work, with an even mind towards success and failure. Evenness of mind (*samatva*) is called *yoga.*

The word *yoga* in this verse means the development of mental equanimity with regard to the success or failure of the action (*karma*) undertaken by an aspirant to *mokṣa.*

The *karma* performed with equanimity of mind is far superior to the *karma* done with a desire for the result. The former is called *buddhi-yoga* as compared to the mere action (*karma*), as is evident from the following verse:

> *dūrena hy avaraṁ karma buddhiyogād dhanañjaya*
> *buddhau śaraṇam anviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phala-hetavaḥ.* II.49

The term *buddhi yoga* is interpreted differently. For Śaṁkara, it means *yoga* of wisdom or the true knowledge of *ātman* (*paramārtha jñāna*). According to Madhva, *yoga* is *upāya* or the means of attaining the knowledge of *Paramātman* and *buddhi-yoga* means the *upāya* in the form of knowledge of *ātman* (*jñānalakṣaṇa-upāya*). Both these interpretations do not seem to be appropriate in the context of *niṣkāma-karma.* Hence, Rāmānuja explains *buddhi-yoga* as the observance of *karma-yoga* characterized with the sense of equanimity (*samatva-buddhi*) and without any attachment to the result (*pradhāna phala-tyāga viṣayaḥ avāntara phala siddhi asiddhayoḥ samatva viṣayaśca buddhi-yogaḥ tadyuktāt karma*). As is made clear in the following verse, it is only such a *karma* that helps to attain liberation from bondage.

> *karmajam buddhiyuktā hi phalaṁ tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ;*
> *janmabandha vinirmuktāḥ padaṁ gacchanty anāmayam.* II.51
> The wise who possess evenness of mind and who relinquish the fruits arising from their action, become freed from the bondage of rebirth and go to the realm free from all suffering *(anāmayam padaṁ)*.

The state of sthitaprajña

After extolling *niṣkāma-karma*, Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks about the state of steadfastness of knowledge known as *sthitaprajña* which arises from the observance of disinterested performance of *karma-yoga*. The relevant verse reads:

śrutivipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niścalā
samādhau acalā buddhis tadā yogam avāpsyasi. II.53

The three commentators are divided in their opinion regarding the nature and implications of this concept. According to Śaṁkara, *sthitaprajñatā* means the state of mind which, bewildered by the Vedic texts, becomes steadfast or fixed in the Self (*samādhau*), free from distractions (*buddhiḥ sthirībhūtā bhaviṣyati vikṣepacalanavarjitā sati ātmani samādhīyate*). More specifically, Śaṁkara explains that a person who has attained the knowledge "I am the Supreme Brahman" is considered to be a *sthitaprajña* (*sthitā pratiṣṭhitā "aham in asmi paraṁ brahma" iti prajñā yasya saḥ sthitaprajñā*).

Madhva offers a different explanation. This is a state of *samādhi* in which the mind of an *aparokṣa-jñānī* becomes absolutely constant and immersed in the Supreme Bliss of direct perception of Brahman, undisturbed even by the loud noise of drums. This state is attained by the *jñānī* after obtaining firm conviction in the Vedic teachings, through hearing and reflection, unlike in the earlier state when the mind was disturbed with conflicting views.[12]

According to Rāmānuja, the *sthitaprajñatā* is the state of mind which is attained by the practice of *niṣkāma karma-yoga* preceded by the knowledge about the true nature of the *ātman* (*jīvātman*) generated by *śāstra* or sacred texts (*śāstra janya ātma jñāna pūrvaka karmayogaḥ sthitaprajñatākhya jñānaniṣṭhāṁ āpādayati*). In other words, it refers to the steadfast knowledge of *jīvātman* (*jñāna-niṣṭha*). This is helpful for obtaining the direct vision of the *jīvātman* (*ātmāvalokana*), which is the goal of both *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*.

The above explanation of Rāmānuja appears more appropriate than that of Śaṁkara and Madhva since it fits with the context in which the teaching is introduced. Arjuna was first instructed with the true nature of the *jīvātman*, as indicated in the verse "*eṣā te abhihitā sāṁkhye*" and he was then told about the need of performing his duty for the sake of duty, with an equanimity of mind and without the expectation of any result. In this connection he is being taught about the observance of *jñāna-yoga* or the development of the steady and concentrated mind to obtain the vision of *jīva*. At this stage and in the absence of meditation on *Paramātman*, it is not possible to have either direct realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman as "*aham brahmāsmi,*" as Śaṁkara states or the direct perception of *Brahman* (*brahma pratyakṣa-darśana*), as Madhva interprets. This will follow only after the *upāsanā* or *bhakti-yoga* is observed either on *ātman* as Brahman or on *Paramātman.* Besides, the subsequent four verses (II.55-58) which describe the four states of a *sthitaprajña* do not also convey the idea of having observed the meditation on *Paramātman.* On the contrary, they speak of the state of the concentrated mind which is deeply immersed in the contemplation of the *jīvātman.*

In reply to a query made by Arjuna to tell him the nature of *sthitaprajña,* Lord Kṛṣṇa describes it in the following four verses:

> *prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān*
> *ātmanyeva ātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñās tadocyate.* II.55
>
> When a person sheds fully all the desires of his mind, O Arjuna, and when his self is content in itself (acc. to Śaṁkara), or when the mind is content with inward concentration on the self (acc. to Rāmānuja), or when he is satisfied being rooted in *Paramātman* by the grace of God (acc. to Madhva), then he is called stable in *prajñā* or wisdom.

Both the words *ātmani* and *ātmanā* used in the verse are taken by Madhva as applicable to *Paramātman.* This means that the *jñānī* who is referred to here is one who, being rooted in *Paramātman* (*ātmani*), and remains by His grace (*ātmanā*), fully satisfied in the vision of *Paramātman* in the state of *samādhi.*

According to Rāmānuja, the two words *ātmani* and *ātmanā* refer to the *jīvātman* and the mind respectively. This means that the aspirant becomes fully satisfied in the inward mental con-centration of the *jīvātman.*

For Śaṁkara, both the words denote the Self which is essentially Brahman and the verse therefore implies that the person who has renounced all desires, remains satisfied in the Self alone by the Self. In other words he delights in the Self and disports in the Self.

In the context of the teaching about *jīvātman* and the method of obtaining its realization or vision, the explanation of Śaṁkara and Madhva in favour of Brahman or *Paramātman* do not appear to be appropriate. The interpretation of Rāmānuja sounds better.

The second verse relating to the nature of *sthitaprajña* states:

duḥkheṣu anudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigataspṛhaḥ
vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīr munirucyate. II.56
He whose mind is not disturbed by the sorrows and who has no craving for pleasures and who is free from passion, fear and anger, he is called a sage of firm wisdom.

The third verse on the *sthitaprajña* reads:

yaḥ sarvatra anabhisnehaḥ tat-tat prāpya śubhāśubham
na' bhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā. II.57
He who has no love on any side (for all pleasing objects), who does not rejoice or loathe when he finds good or evil, his mind or intelligence is firmly established.

The last verse on this subject says:

yadā saṁharate ca'yam kūrmo' ṅgānī va sarvaśaḥ
indriyāni indriyārthebhyaḥ tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā. II.58
He who draws away his senses from the objects of senses on every side as a tortoise draws in its limbs (into the shell), then his mind or wisdom is firmly set.

According to Śaṁkara, these four verses describe the characteristics of an individual who is considered to be a *sthita-prajña* or one who has realized the identity of his Self with Brahman, which is the direct means to liberation from bondage. Such a person is a sage (*muni*) who has reached the stage of *saṁnyāsa*, with total renunciation of all rituals (*karma*). The doctrine of identity of the Self and Brahman is not explicitly taught in the *Gītā*. Similarly, the theory that an aspirant for *mokṣa* following the pathway of *jñāna* should have renounced all *karmas* is also open to dispute.

According to Madhva, these four verses refer to the identity marks of an *aparokṣa-jñānī* known as *sthitaprajña* or an individual who has attained a direct perception of Brahman. In the absence of any reference to the meditation on *Paramātman* in this *adhyāya*, the direct perception of *Paramātman* does not arise. Besides, the question would arise, why such a *jñānī* who has had blissful vision of *Paramātman* should still remain embodied and should have any need to engage himself in external activities. This objection is met by maintaining the view that due to the influence of *prārabdha karma* and the *vāsanās* of the past he is impelled to engage in some activities. But this would amount to the admission of the persistence of bondage even after the direct vision of *Paramātman.* According to the Upaniṣads, the bondage should cease to exist when once *Paramātman* is seen (*kṣiyante ca asya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare*).[13] If the theory of *jīvanmukti* as advocated by Advaita is accepted, it is possible to explain the continuation of the activities even after one has realized Brahman. But Madhva does not subscribe to this theory.

According to Rāmānuja, the four verses describe the four states (*avasthās*) of *sthitaprajña* or the *jñānaniṣtha,* that is, the one who has attained mental steadfastness in the knowledge of *ātman* after pursuing the *karma-yoga* or the disinterested performance of the prescribed deeds. These four states are enunciated in a descending order and correspond, as well explained by Vedānta Deśika, to the four states of *vairāgya* or the spirit of non-attachment described in the *Yoga-śāstra* of Pātañjali viz., *vaśīkāra-saṁjñā, ekendriya-saṁjñā, vyatireka-saṁjñā* and *yatamāna-saṁjña.*[14] The differentiation of the states is determined in terms of the measure of the mind's concentration on the self achieved and that of the gradual control of the sense organs and the mind. This explanation appears sound as it fully justifies the description of the nature of *sthitaprajña* in four states, each of which is distinct from the other in descending order. This state of *jñānaniṣthatva* represents, according to Rāmānuja, the beginning of the *jñāna-yoga* or the pathway to knowledge enunciated in the later *adhyāyas* for attaining the goal of vision of the *jīvātman* (*ātmāvalokana*) which serves as the means to *bhakti-yoga* enunciated in *adhyāyas* VII-XII. We shall discuss the merit of this view in the chapter on General Evaluation.

The soundness of the explanation offered by Rāmānuja regarding the nature of *sthitaprajña* as a state of steadiness of mind fixed on the knowledge of *ātman* becomes evident from the subsequent verse emphasizing the need to control the senses (*indriya nigraha*). Lord Kṛṣṇa specifically states that when the senses are kept under control, the *prajñā* of that individual is firmly set (*vaśe hi yasya indriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhita*). The impetuous senses will carry off by force the mind of even a wise person, though he may be striving to control it. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore instructs Arjuna to focus his mind on Him. When the mind is focussed on the Lord as the object of meditation it becomes purified. It would then be able to control the senses and experience the self. The *Gītā* verse says: *tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya yukta āsīta matparaḥ.* (*BG,* II.61)

The statement *matparaḥ āsīta* is interpreted by Śaṁkara to mean one should concentrate on Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme, that is, that Vāsudeva is the innermost Self of all, thinking that *jīva* is not different from Him. This explanation emphasizes the identity of *jīva* and Brahman.

For Rāmānuja and Madhva, *jīva* is different from Brahman. Accordingly this statement means for Rāmānuja that the aspirant who tries to conquer the senses, should focus the mind on God Kṛṣṇa who is the only auspicious object for meditation and who is capable of removing all the impurities. According to Madhva, *matparaḥ* means that one should regard Vāsudeva as the Highest of all and fix the mind on the Lord as the most potent aid for the conquest of the senses. Whatever may be the manner of contemplation, it is clear from the *Gītā* that one attains the serenity and purity of the mind and with its acquisition, the person becomes free from sorrow and his *buddhi* is well established in *ātman*. Such a person who abandons all desires and acts without any sense of "I" and "mine" attains peace (*śānti*). This is a state which is described by the *Gītā* as *brāhmī-sthiti* or divine state. The relevant verse reads:

> *eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha nai'nām prāpya vimuhyati*
> *sthitvā asyām antakāle'pi brahmanirvāṇam ṛccati.* II.72
> This is the *brāhmī* state, O Arjuna, having attained hereto, one is not again deluded. By abiding in this state even at the end (hour of death), one can attain *brahma-nirvāṇa.*

The two terms in this verse, *brāhmī-sthiti* and *brahma-nirvāṇa* are open to different interpretations. For Śaṁkara, *brāhmī-sthiti* means the state of being established in Brahman, that is, to continue in life as identical with Brahman, after renouncing all actions (*brāhmī brahmaṇi bhāva iyam sthitiḥ sarvam karma-saṁnyasya brahma svarūpeṇaiva avasthānam*). *Brahma-nirvāṇa* means the *mokṣa* or liberation, which according to Śaṁkara, is the realization of oneself as identical with Brahman. That is, one who remains established only in Brahman during the whole life attains identification with Brahman.

For Madhva, *brāhmī-sthiti* means the state of one who has attained supreme knowledge of Brahman (*brahma viṣaya sthitiḥ, lakṣaṇam*). The word *nirvāṇa* means the bodyless Brahman (the word *vāṇa* being understood as *śarīra* or body). So the *jñānī* reaches Brahman by remaining in this state until the last moment of his life. If he fails to attain it, he will have to take another birth and attain it eventually.

According to Rāmānuja, *brāhmī-sthiti* means the state which secures the attainment of *jīvātman*, the term *brahma* being taken in the sense of *jīvātman*. The word *brahma* also denotes *jīva* (*brāhmī brahma prāpikā sthitiḥ*). This state is the same as *sthitaprajñatā* obtained from the disinterested performance of *karma* preceded by the knowledge of *jīvātman*. (*nityātma-jñāna pūrvikā asaṅga karmaṇi sthitiḥ sthitadhīlakṣaṇa brāhmī brahma-prāpikā*.) After attaining this state, one is not deluded, that is, one will not return to bondage. The word *brahma-nirvāṇa* means the blissful *ātman*, the word *brahma* being understood as *jīvātman* (*sukhaikātānam ātmānam*). Accordingly, the meaning of the later part of the verse is that he attains the self, which is constituted of bliss.

The explanation offered by Śaṁkara may be justified on the basis of the doctrines of Advaita according to which *jīvātman* is identical with Brahman and *mokṣa* is the direct realization of this identity by means of *jñāna-yoga*. Whether or not these doctrines are supported by the *Gītā* need to be considered. As regards the interpretation of Madhva, the teaching of this *adhyāya* is primarily devoted to the nature of *jīvātman* and incidentally the state of *sthitaprajñatva* attained after pursuing the *niṣkāma-karma*. At this stage, the direct perception of Brahman does not take place in the absence of meditation on *Paramātman*. As Rāmānuja rightly points out, in the second *adhyāya* the Lord wants to remove the delusion of Arjuna, who did not know the real nature of the self (*jīvātman*) and also did not realize that fighting the war ordained as a duty for a *kṣatriya* is the means of attaining the self. Arjuna was under the delusion that the body itself is the self, and being dominated by that illusion, he wanted to retreat from the war. He was therefore required to be taught about the knowledge of the *ātman* called Sāṁkhya and also Yoga or the path of action without attachment. These two together have as their objective the attainment of steadfast wisdom (*sthitaprajña*). In this context, the chapter concludes with the teaching of the *brāhmī-sthiti* by the attainment of which one is not deluded and wins *brahma-nirvāṇa* even at the hour of death, if he continues in that state. It is therefore appropriate to regard *brahma-nirvāṇa* of a *sthitaprajña* as the attainment of the blissful *jīvātman* (*ātmāvalokana*) which is the goal of *jñāna-yoga* enunciated in later *adhyāyas*. We shall further discuss these issues in the chapter on General Evaluation.

REFERENCES

1. RB on *BG*, II.12, *yathā aham̐ sarveśvaraḥ Paramātmā nitya iti na atra sam̐śayaḥ, tathaiva bhavantaḥ kṣetrajña ātmanaḥ api nitya eva iti mantavyaḥ.*
2. See *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (hereinafter cited as *Kaṭha Up.*), V.13: *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (hereinafter cited as *Śvet. Up.*), *nityo nityānām̐ cetanaḥ cetanānām eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān.*
3. *Vedāntasūtra*, II.3.18, *nā'tmā śruteśca nityavācca tābhyaḥ.*
4. *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (hereinafter cited as *VP)*, II.4.24, *anāśi paramārthaśca prājñaiḥ abhyupagamyate tatu nāsi na sandeho nāśidravyopapāditam.*
5. See *Kaṭha Up.*, II.18–19.
6. *BG*, II.24.
7. Ibid., II.25.
8. See *BG*, VII.7, *mayi sarvamidam̐ protam̐ sūtre maṇigaṇā iva.* . . . XV.7, *mamaivām̐śo jīvaloke.* . . . Also, *BG*, X.8, *aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvam pravartate.*
9. See Madhva-bhāsya (hereinafter cited as MB) on *BG*, II.39, *sām̐khyam jñānam śuddhātma tattva vijñanam sām̐khyam ityabhidhīyate' iti bhagavadvacanāt vyāsa smṛtau.*
10. See B.K.N. Sharma, *BG* of Madhvācārya, pp. 34-35.
11. *BG*, III.3, see also ch. 3.
12. See MB on *BG*, II.53.
    pūrvam śrutibhiḥ vedaiḥ vipratipannā viruddhā sati, yadā vedārthānukūlena tattvaniścayena viparītā-vāgbhirapi niścala bhavati tataśca samādhau acalā. Brahma pratyakṣa darśanena bherītādānādāvapi paramānanda magnatvāt.
13. See *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (hereinafter cited as *Mu. Up.*), II.2.9.
14. See *Tātparya-candrikā* on RB (hereinafter cited as *TC* on RB), *yatamāna sam̐jñā* is the first state in which effort is made to concentrate the mind on *jīvātman* by forcibly withdrawing the senses from the objects.

    Vyatireka sam̐jñā is the second state in which the senses though controlled, the mind being influenced by *rāga* and *dveṣa*, cannot be concentrated fully on *ātman*. Hence it becomes necessary to put down *rāga* and *dveṣa*.

    Ekendriya sam̐jñā is the third state in which the *vāsanās* or the latent impressions of the past lives may prevent full concentration on *ātman* and this is to be arrested by developing geater concentration on *ātman*.

    The *vaśīkāra sam̐jñā* is the fourth and final state in which there is total absence of desire for both heavenly and earthly objects. This is the perfect state of *vairāgya* needed for total concentration of mind as described in the *Yogasūtra* (hereinafter cited as *YS)*, I-16, *dṛṣṭa anuśravika viṣaya vitṛṣṇasya vaśīkāra samjñā vairāgyam.*

CHAPTER 3

The Theory of *Karma-yoga*

THE third *adhyāya* discusses in greater detail the theory of *karma-yoga*. In the preceding *adhyāya* mention was made about the need to perform the prescribed deeds without desire for the results (*niṣkāma-karma*) and also about the importance of steadfastness in the knowledge of the self (*sthitaprajñatā*). This has given rise to the question: which of the two—the path of action (*karma-yoga*) and the path of knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*)—one should follow. Arjuna, therefore poses the following question:

> *jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te matā buddhir janārdana*
> *tatkiṁ karmaṇi ghore māṁ niyojayasi keśava.* III.1
>
> O Janārdana (Kṛṣṇa), if you consider that knowledge (*buddhi*) is superior to *karma*, why then do you urge me to resort to this dreadful action.

The implication of this query is explained by the commentators in different ways. Śaṁkara discusses at great length in his preface to this *adhyāya*, the controversial theory in Vedānta relating to the need of both *jñāna* and *karma* as the means to *mokṣa*. This is known as *jñānakarma-samuccayavāda*. He contends that *jñāna* taken in the sense of the realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman is the sole means to *mokṣa* (*kevalādeva jñānāt mokṣa iti arthaḥ niścito gītāsu*). This view is based on the assumption that *jñāna* and *karma* are opposed to each other and the person who pursues the path of knowledge is required to renounce all the *karmas*. Accordingly, *jñāna-yoga* is of greater importance than *karma-yoga*. Arjuna, therefore seeks to know precisely, which of the two paths—*jñāna* and *karma*—he should follow.

According to Rāmānuja, the query is based on the misunderstanding of the relative importance of the two disciplines—*jñānaniṣṭha* or the adherence to the knowledge of the self and *karmaniṣṭha* or adherence to *karma*. The *jñānaniṣṭha* which leads to the realization of the self (*jīvātman*) requires the cessation of all activities of the senses, whereas *karmaniṣṭha,* which indirectly secures the vision of the self involves the activities of the senses. Why then, should he resort to it? This is the implication of the question raised by Arjuna.

According to Madhva, the Lord had told Arjuna in the previous *adhyāya* (II.49) that *jñāna* also known as *sāṁkhya,* in the sense of the knowledge of *jīvātman* and *Paramātman,* is superior to *niṣkāma-karma,* which is only a means to it. Arjuna is therefore seeking to know why he should engage himself in this terrible war.

But the subsequent verses (III.3-8) which provide an answer to the query of Arjuna emphasizing the necessity of doing *karma,* do not support the view advanced by Śaṁkara.

Lord Kṛṣṇa first states about two kinds of discipline:

loke'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā anagha
jñānayogena sāṁkhyānāṁ karmayogena yogīnām. III.3
O, unblemished one, for the people of this world, two kinds of discipline were taught by Me in the days of yore (previously, acc. to R)—*jñāna-yoga* for the Sāṁkhyas and *karma-yoga* for the yogins.

According to Śaṁkara's interpretation this verse draws a clear distinction between *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* which are considered as two exclusive disciplines intended for two different categories of people. *Jñāna-yoga* or the pathway of knowledge adopted for the realization of the self is meant for those who, after renouncing all worldly attachments, have become monastics (*parivrājakas*) from the stage of *brahmacarya* itself. Only such persons are capable of pursuing the *jñāna-mārga* and attain the realization of the self, which is total liberation from bondage. They are not required to perform the prescribed deeds. Others such as the householders (*gṛhasthas*) who are the *karmaniṣṭhas* are required to perform the *karmas.*

According to Madhva, there are in this world two orders of persons, both adhering to the law of the Supreme Lord:

1. Those who pursue the path of *jñāna* exclusively by adopting the ascetic life and giving up the duties of the householders.
2. Those remaining as *gṛhasthas* (householders) who do their duties, but still adhere to knowledge.

As an *ādhikārika,* or one under the command of the Lord, even a *jñānī* is required to do *karma.* The two are not exclusive paths intended for different categories of persons.

According to Rāmānuja also, *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* are not two exclusive paths, though they are intended for different kinds of persons, in accordance with their competence. *Jñāna-yoga* is meant for those persons who are competent to follow the discipline of the knowledge of the self and *karma-yoga* is intended for those who are competent for the path of action (*karma*). Those who are capable of developing the concentration of mind by the practice of *yoga* discipline and meditate on the self can follow the *jñāna-yoga*. Others have to pursue the pathway of *karma*. As explained by Rāmānuja, it is not possible for everyone to embark on the pathway of knowledge. Before resorting to *jñāna-yoga*, one has to develop the purity of mind by observing the performance of prescribed *karmas* without any desire for results.

The *Gītā* itself points out that by the mere abstention from *karma*, a man does not attain freedom from action (*naiṣkarmya*). Nor by mere renunciation of the deeds, does he attain true state of perfection. Besides, it is not possible for one to remain even for a moment without doing work. Everyone is made to work in spite of himself under the influence of the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. Thus it says:

nahi kaścit kṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ. III.5

The body is constituted of three *guṇas—sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and it is inevitably made to function through physical and mental activities. *Karma* or action is therefore inescapable for an individual. Even for a *jñāna-yogī*, the performance of prescribed deeds is unavoidable, as he has to sustain his life until the goal is achieved. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore instructs Arjuna to perform the prescribed deeds:

niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ karma jyāyo hi akarmaṇaḥ. III.8
You must perform obligatory duties, for *karma* or action is superior to *akarma* or inaction (*jñāna-yoga* acc. to R). Thus it follows that *karma-yoga* is superior to *jñāna-yoga*.

The *Gītā* clearly points out that the performance of the ritualistic deeds (*yajña*) laid down by the sacred texts does not cause any bondage to an individual as long as he remains unattached to it. Thus it says:

yajñarthāt karmaṇo'nyatra loko'yam karmabandhanaḥ
tadarthaṁ karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara. III.9

Man is bound by shackles of *karma* only when engaged in action other than work performed for the sake of sacrifice. Therefore, O Arjuna, you do perform *karma* without attachment for the purpose of *yajña.*

According to Madhva, *yajña* signifies the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. *Karmas* performed as *yajña* becomes a worship of God.

Lord Kṛṣṇa explains how the Vedic sacrifices are part of the divine creation. When God created human beings he also introduced the Vedic sacrifices for their own benefits. The deities worshipped through the sacrifices confer the benefits to the individuals in the form of food and other desired objects. There is mutual dependence of the deities and men. It is like a wheel set in motion by the Supreme Person and one should follow it without fail.

Lord Kṛṣṇa categorically states:

evaṁ pravartitam cakram nānuvartayatī' ha yaḥ
aghāyur indriyārāmo moghaṁ pārtha sa jīvati. III.16
He who does not follow the wheel thus set in motion in this world, lives a sinful life in vain indulging in sensual pleasures.

Karma is therefore inevitable for all individuals.

As regards the question: whether there is anyone who does not have to perform any deeds, the *Gītā* states:

yastu ātmaratireva syāt ātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ
ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭaḥ tasya kāryam na vidyate. III.17
nai' va tasya kṛtenā'rtho na akṛtena iha kaścana
nacā'sya sarvabhūteṣu kaścit arthavyapāśrayaḥ. III.18
But the person whose delight is in the self only, who is gratified with the self, who is content with the self, for him there is no need to perform any deed (for the sake of realizing the self–acc. to R).
For such a person there is nothing to be gained from work done (as a means for the vision of the self (acc. to R) nor is he subject to any evil from work left undone. He does not have to depend on all these beings to serve any purpose of his own.

These two verses are interpreted by Śaṁkara in favour of the individuals who pursue the pathway of knowledge after having renounced all worldly desires (*parivrājakas*) and who are regarded as *jñānaniṣṭhas* as contrasted to the *karmaniṣṭhas.* In the case of the *jñānaniṣṭhas*, the need to perform the prescribed deeds does not arise because they have already renounced everything and engaged in the pursuit of *jñāna-yoga.* But it is open to dispute whether the total renunciation of the *karmas* by *jñānaniṣṭha* is advocated by the *Gītā.* As will be seen in the subsequent *adhyāya* it is not so.

Madhva takes the word *ātman* as *Paramātman.* Accordingly, these verses refer to the *aparokṣa jñānī* or the one who has attained the state of *asaṁprajñāta samādhi* in which he is absorbed in *Paramātman* and hence there is no need for any action. The word *ātmarati* means one who has attained the bliss of seeing *Paramātman.*

It is not clear whether the concept of *asaṁprajñāta samādhi* admitted in the Yoga system is referred to in the above verses. Even if it is accepted, the goal of *samādhi,* according to Patañjali, is *Puruṣa* or the Self and not *Paramātman.* If we take into consideration, the earlier verses in which the necessity of performance of the Vedic sacrifices (*yajña*) is emphasized and the subsequent verses in which Arjuna is being instructed to perform the prescribed deeds as *asaktaḥ* or with the sense of non-attachment, these verses (III.17-18) are applicable, as correctly interpreted by Rāmānuja, to the individual who has already realized the self and who is absorbed in the enjoyment of the blissful soul. In the case of such persons, there is no need to perform the prescribed deeds as part of the *jñāna-yoga* to be adopted for the vision of the soul, since he has already attained the vision of the self. Lord Kṛṣṇa, therefore instructs Arjuna to perform the obligatory duty by remaining unattached to it.

tasmāt asaktaḥ kāryam karma samācara
asakto hy ācaran karma param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ. III.19
Therefore, without attachment, always practice *karma-yoga* as an end in itself. By practising *karma-yoga* without attachment, a person attains higher goal (Self acc. to R and *sattvaśuddhi* acc. to S).

The *Gītā* cites the example of Janaka and others who are learned kṣatriyas and who are *jñānīs* to substantiate the fact that even *jñāna-yogins* strive to attain liberation through the observance of *karma-yoga* (*karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitaḥ janakādayaḥ*).

By the observance of *karma-yoga,* the *jñānīs* would set an example and provide guidance for others and thereby promote the welfare of the world (*lokasaṁgraha*). Whatever a great man does, other men also follow him; whichever standard he sets, the world follows. Even Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Being keeps Himself engaged in activities, although there is nothing in the world for Him to do or anything worth attaining which is not already attained. If He did not engage Himself in action, it would cause harm to the world since men follow His path in all matters.

After having emphasized the importance of *karma-yoga* even for the *jñāna-yogins,* Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches the manner in which the *karma-yoga* is to be practised in order to attain the higher spiritual goal. What is needed for this purpose is to develop the mental attitude that the individual who performs the deeds is not the doer or agent of action (*kartā*). How is this possible? The *Gītā* tells that all actions are being done by the influence of three *guṇas* of *prakṛti* and not by the individual self by itself. But the individual thinks on account of the delusion of the body itself as the self, that the self is the doer. But with a clear understanding of the true nature of the self and the role of the *guṇas* of which the mind and the senses are constituted, the *karma-yogin* realizes that the individual self by itself is not the cause of the actions. The relevant verses read:

> *prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaih karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ*
> *ahaṁkāra vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate.* III.27
> *tattvavit tu mahābāho guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ*
> *guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate.* III.28
> All actions are being done by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti.* He whose mind is deluded by egoism considers himself to be the doer.
> But he who knows the truth about the respective spheres of the *guṇas* and actions through the knowledge that the *guṇas* in the form of the senses and mind operate, does not become attached to the actions.

Lord Kṛṣṇa also instructs Arjuna an easier way of overcoming the sense of egoism. He advises him to dedicate all actions to the Supreme Lord by focusing the mind on the self. Thus he says:

> *mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi saṁnyāsya adhyātma cetasā*
> *nirāsīḥ nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ.* III.30
> By dedicating all actions to Me, with the mind being focused on the self, you fight (perform action), free from desires and selfishness and devoid of any mental anguish.

The significance of the verse, as well explained by Rāmānuja, is that the Supreme Person who is the Ruler and Controller of all, gets done His own work for the purpose of getting Himself worshipped through the means of his own instruments in the form of the individual selves which belong to Him and which function as agents of action (*svakīyena ātmanā kartā svakīyaiḥ eva karaṇaiḥ svārādhanaika prayojanāya parama puruṣaḥ sarveśvaraḥ sarva śeṣī svayameva svakarmāṇi kārayati*).[1] A similar view is also expressed by Śaṁkara and Madhva. This teaching of the *Gītā* emphasizes the need to develop the mental attitude in the performance of all religious acts. It helps to eschew egoism and develop a sound mental disposition which is conducive to the spiritual upliftment leading to the realization of the self. Lord Kṛṣṇa himself says that this is the essential teaching of the *śāstra*. The relevant verse reads:

> *ye me matam idaṁ nityam anutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ*
> *śraddhāvanto anasūyanto mucyante te'pi karmabhiḥ.* III.31
> Those men, who follow this teaching of mine with faith and without cavil, they are released from the shackles of *karma* that cause bondage.

It also states that those who find fault with it and who do not follow the teaching would perish without reaching the higher spiritual goal.

After stressing the importance of *karma-yoga*, Lord Kṛṣṇa points out the difficulty one has to encounter in the observance of *jñāna-yoga*. The greatest obstacles that come in the way of the practice of *jñāna-yoga* are *rāga* or attachment of senses to the objects of pleasure and *dveṣa* or aversion when the desires to enjoy them are not fulfilled. All beings including the men of knowledge (*jñānavān*) are bound by the physical constitution (*prakṛti*) and they are naturally attracted by the objects of pleasure owing to the influence of the latent impressions of the past lives. It therefore becomes difficult to escape from the clutches of the uncontrollable senses. In view of it, the *Gītā* advocates that it is better to pursue one's own *dharma* (which in the present context refers to *karma-yoga*, acc. to R) even if it is not perfect than pursuing a perilous *para dharma* (which refers to *jñāna-yoga* acc. to R). Thus states the *Gītā:*

> *śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt*
> *svadharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayavahaḥ.* III.35
> Better is one's own duty (*svadharma*), though ill done, than the duty of another (*para dharma*) well performed. Even death in the performance of one's duty brings blessedness; another's duty is fraught with fear.

Śaṁkara takes the term *svadharma* and *paradharma* in the ordinary sense as the *varṇāśrama dharma* or duties laid down by the sacred texts in accordance with one's caste and stages of life. But in the context of the teaching about the relative merits of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, this meaning is not appropriate. Arjuna is not thinking of relative importance of kṣatriya *dharma* as against brāhmaṇa *dharma* or *saṁnyāsa dharma.* Hence, the word *svadharma* means what one is capable of pursuing on his own without effort and it refers to *karma-yoga* (*svenaiva upādātum yogyatayā svadharma-bhūte karmayoge*). *Paradharma* in this context means *jñāna-yoga*, which is difficult to follow as it is confronted with obstacles.

By way of further elucidation of the difficulties involved in the practice of *jñāna-yoga*, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in a characteristic way that there are two great enemies that confront the *jñāna-yogī* and which thwart the progress of the discipline. These are, *kāma* (desire) and *krodha* (wrath), both of which are caused by *rajoguṇa.* Thus he says:

> *kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ*
> *mahāśano mahāpāpmā vidhyenam iha vairiṇam.* III.37
>
> It is desire, it is wrath, born of the *guṇa* of *rajas*; It is a great devourer, a great impeller to sin. Know this to be the enemy here.

Kāma or desire arises out of the *rajas*, which is innate in one's mind due to the influence of the latent impressions of the past lives. It attracts the person towards the objects of pleasure. When the desire is hampered, it develops itself into anger towards those persons who are the cause of such hindrance. It incites the person to do harm to others and consequently causes sin. Thus these two unethical qualities constitute a natural enemy of *jñāna-yoga.*

Lord Kṛṣṇa further points out that the self (knowledge acc. to S) is enveloped by desire (*kāma*) in the same way as fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror is covered by dust and as an embryo is encased in the membrane. The desire operates through the senses, mind and the intellect (*buddhi*). It deludes the self by veiling the knowledge. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore addresses Arjuna to endeavour to control the senses from the beginning:

> *tasmāt tvam indriyāny ādau niyamya bharatarṣabha*
> *pāpmānaṁ prajahi hyenam jñāna vijñānanāśanam.* III.41

> Therefore O Arjuna, by controlling the senses in the very beginning, slay this sinful thing (*kāma*) that destroys knowledge and discrimination.

From the foregoing analysis of the teachings of the third *adhyāya,* it follows that the *karma-yoga* is an important means for the realization of the self (*ātmāvalokana*) acc. to R or for gaining purity of mind (*sattvaśuddhi*) acc. to S and M. It is to be observed even by those who embark on the path of *jñāna-yoga.*

REFERENCE

1. RB on *BG,* III.30. Cf., ŚB, III.30, *aham kartā Īśvarasya bhṛtyatvāt karomi ity anayā buddhyā.* Also MB, III.30, *bhagavāneva sarvāṇi karmāṇi karotīti matpūjeti ca.*

CHAPTER 4

Karma-yoga and its Relation to *Jñāna-yoga*

THE fourth *adhyāya* which is generally named *jñāna-karma saṁnyāsa-yoga* and also *jñāna-yoga* covers mostly further details about the nature and types of *karma-yoga* and its relation to *jñāna-yoga.* It also outlines incidentally, the significance of the incarnation of the Supreme Lord (*avatāra rahasya*).

At the outset, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells that the *yoga* taught to Arjuna is an ancient doctrine which was imparted by the Lord to Vivasvān at the very commencement of the world and the same was handed down in succession through several royal sages. What is this *yoga* which is considered as *avyaya* or imperishable? According to Śaṁkara, it is *jñāna-yoga,* whereas it is *karma-yoga* for Rāmānuja. For Madhva also it is *jñāna-yoga* taken in the sense of knowledge of *Paramātman.*

In his preface to the opening verse, Śaṁkara observes that the *yoga* which was mentioned in the earlier *adhyāyas* is characterized by steadfastness in knowledge (*stithaprajñatā*) associated with renunciation of *karma* (*saṁnyāsa*) and it is to be achieved through *karma-yoga.* He also adds that with this teaching, the main purport of Vedānta is almost covered and it is the same *yoga* that is referred to in all other parts of the *Gītā.*[1] This claim of Śaṁkara is untenable because what is taught earlier is *karma-yoga* culminating in the state of *sthitaprajña.* In a later verse (IV.15) Lord Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna to do *karma-yoga* which was pursued by ancient sages such as Manu for attaining *mokṣa* (*kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṁ kṛtam*).

In this connection Lord Kṛṣṇa in response to the query made by Arjuna about the descent of the Supreme Lord explains the theory of incarnation (*avatāra*). The following three verses sum up the significance of *avatāra*:

> *ajo' pi sann avyayātmā bhūtanām īśvaro'pi san*
> *prakṛtim svām adhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmy ātmamāyayā.* IV.6

> Though I am unborn and of immutable nature, though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, by remaining Myself in My own nature (*prakṛti*), I am born through My own *māyā* or free will (acc. to R and M).

The word *prakṛti* in the verse is interpreted by Śaṁkara to mean the primordial cosmic matter consisting of the three *guṇas* which, according to him, is His own power named as *māyā* or the cosmic principle of illusion. By adopting this meaning for *māyā*, various incarnations of the Supreme Being are regarded as illusory manifestations and not real. Rāmānuja and Madhva do not accept this interpretation. The incarnation is as real as His original form. The word *svām prakṛti* means His own nature (*svabhāva*), that is, the transcendental spiritual form.The word *māyā* also means *jñāna* or knowledge (*māyā vayunam jñānam*) and accordingly *ātma māyayā* means "out of his own free will" (*atmīya jñānena* or *ātmāsaṁkalpena*). This meaning is appropriate since the *avatāras* of the Supreme Being cannot be regarded as illusory manifestations. The scriptural text[2] which supports the theory of *avatāra* states: "Being unborn, He is born in various forms." It signifies that God who is not subject to birth due to *karma*, as in the case of the individual souls, takes on many forms spontaneously out of His own free will without abrogating His intrinsic nature. Hence the various incarnations of God are real. In a later verse it is stated "I incarnate myself (IV.7)." The knowledge of the divine incarnation is also stated to purify the mind of an individual by securing liberation. (IV.9)

The subsequent verses explain the time and purpose of such incarnations:

> *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bharāta*
> *abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmy aham.* IV.7
> Whenever there is a decline of *dharma*, O Arjuna and uprising of *adharma*, then I incarnate Myself.

There is no specific restriction of the time for the descent of the Lord. He takes birth as and when the need arises, in the form of celestial beings or human beings or even animals from age to age.

The purpose of such incarnation is the protection of the pious and the destruction of the wicked and also for the establishment of *dharma*. Thus it is stated:

paritrāṇāya sādhūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharma saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge. IV.8

One other important feature of the *avatāra* is that in whatever manner the devotees think of God according to their inclination and resort to him faithfully, God reveals to them in the same manner as desired by them. The relevant verse reads:

ye yathā māṁ prapadyante taṁstathaiva bhajāmyaham
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ. IV.11
Whoever resort to me in any manner, in the same manner I do favour them; people experience Me in different ways.

Śaṁkara takes this verse to mean that in whatever manner persons approach God, He favours them in that very manner. That is, if an individual is seeking liberation from bondage, he is granted liberation. If on the contrary, a person worships God for certain material benefits, he would be rewarded with them. Madhva explains it in a different way. Though *mokṣa* is not attainable by worshipping God through the medium of other Gods, yet God bestows rewards to all his devotees according to the measure and standpoint of their worship. Both these explanations do not appear to be appropriate in the context of enunciating the *avatāra rahasya.* As correctly interpreted by Rāmānuja, the verse signifies that in whatever kind of image the devotees wish to worship and see God, in that very form He manifests Himself. This is amply evidenced by the various descriptions of God's incarnations in the Itihāsas and Purāṇas.

Coming to the main theme of *karma-yoga,* Lord Kṛṣṇa tells that this is a deep subject and that one should properly understand the significance of the concept of *karma, vikarma* and *akarma.* Thus he says:

karmaṇo hy api boddhavyam boddhavyam ca vikarmaṇaḥ
akarmaṇaśca boddhavyam gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ. IV.17
One has to understand what *karma* is and likewise one has to know what is *vikarma*; one has also to understand about *akarma.* It is hard to understand the way of *karma.*

This verse is interpreted differently by the commentators. For Śaṁkara and Madhva, the term *karma* means prescribed deeds enjoined by the scriptures (*śāstra vihitasya karma*). Rāmānuja explains this in a specific way as the deeds that serve as means to *mokṣa* (*mokṣa sādhanabhūta karma*). *Vikarma* is taken by Śaṁkara and Madhva as prohibited action. For Rāmānuja it means varied forms of the deeds such as obligatory, occasional and those motivated with the desires for fruits (*nitya naimittika kāmya rūpeṇa vaividhyatām āpannaḥ*). The term *akarma* is interpreted by Śaṁkara as inaction, that is, sitting quietly (*tūṣṇīm bhāva*). Madhva also adopts the same meaning as not doing any act (*karma akaraṇam*). According to Rāmānuja, *akarma* which is other than *karma* is *jñāna* or knowledge of *ātman*. Whether or not the meaning of the term *akarma* offered by Śaṁkara and Madhva is appropriate becomes evident from the following subsequent verse:

> *karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ*
> *sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt.* IV.18
>
> He who sees inaction (*akarma*) in action (*karma*) and action (*karma*) in inaction (*akarma*), he is wise among men. He is a *yogī* (acc. to S) or he is a true *karma-yogī* (acc. to M) or he is fit for release (acc. to R). And he has accomplished all actions.

This is an important verse, which if properly interpreted in accordance with the context in which it is stated, explains the true nature of *karma-yoga* and its relation to *jñāna* or knowledge of *ātman* also known as *jñāna-yoga*. If *karma* is taken in the sense of prescribed action, it cannot have any bearing on *akarma* in the sense of inaction as understood by Śaṁkara and Madhva. The statement that one should see inaction in action or vice versa is apparently self-contradictory for action cannot become inaction nor inaction action. Śaṁkara gets over this objection by conceiving the theory that the *ātman*, as declared by scriptural texts is pure subject devoid of action (*akartā*), but yet it is regarded as having action by superimposition of doership that belongs to the *antaḥkaraṇa* on it due to *avidyā* or ignorance. The Lord's teaching namely that one should see *akarma* in *karma* is intended to point out the need to understand the correct position namely, that *ātman* is not the *kartā* (*akartā*). In the same way the physical body which is the instrument of action is by its very nature characterized by action but due to ignorance we attribute its action to the self and think that the self is the agent of action (*kartā*) instead of understanding it as devoid of action (*akartā*).

This explanation may be justified on the basis of the Advaita doctrine of *ātman* as *akartā* and that *kartṛtva* which belongs to the *antaḥkaraṇa* is falsely superimposed on the self. But this doctrine of *ātman* and the theory of superimposition caused by *avidyā* as adopted by Advaita Vedānta is open to dispute. According to the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra,* if properly interpreted, these theories are not sustainable. Nor do we find in the *Gītā,* any verses which explicitly support the theory. In the present context of the teaching about the *karma-yoga* and its relation to *jñāna,* there is no justification to impose these theories on the present verse (IV.18).

Madhva, who interprets the terms *karma* and *akarma* as prescribed acts and non-action respectively, gets over the apparent contradiction in the statement namely "He who sees *akarma* in *karma* and vice versa" by adopting a theological explanation. According to him Viṣṇu or the Supreme Deity is to be regarded as the main agent of action (*pradhāna kartā*) and the *jīvātman* which is his *pratibimba,* is not the doer of anything independently (*akarma*). That is, while carrying out the prescribed *karma,* the individual should see therein that the Lord is the primary agent of action by realizing the fact that it is done by the Lord Himself, while the individual soul, being his *pratibimba,* is not the doer of anything independently (*karmaṇi kriyamāṇe sati akarma yaḥ paśyet, viṣṇoreva karma naham cit pratibimbaḥ kiñcit karomi iti*).[3] As regards the statement "He who sees *akarma* in *karma,*" one should see in the states of dream and deep sleep, when there is no activity on the part of the individual soul, that the Lord carries out the activity (*akarmaṇi suptyādau akaraṇāvasthāyām parameśvarasya karma yaḥ paśyet*).

Whatever may be the merit of this explanation from Madhva's theological point of view, this would amount to the denial of *kartṛtva* for *jīvātman* in the primary sense. Such a view would stand opposed to the teaching of the Upaniṣad and the *Vedāntasūtra* which admit *kartṛtva* for the *jīvātman.* The *Vedāntasūtra* clearly states: *kartā śāstrārthavatvāt. Jīva* is to be admitted as the agent of action, as otherwise the scriptural injunctions which enjoin to do a prescribed act and avoid prohibited act would have no meaning. If *jīva* is not the *kartā* and if he did not have any freedom to perform an act prescribed by *śāstra,* the observance of *niṣkāma karma* or *karma-yoga* by the *jīva* as a *sādhana* for *mokṣa* would have no significance. Besides, in the present context of teaching the *svarūpa* of *karma* and its bearing on *jñāna* or *jñāna-yoga,* Madhva's explanation of the present verse does not appear to be appropriate.

These problems do not arise if the terms *karma* and *akarma* are interpreted as *karma* and *jñāna* respectively in the correct sense, as Rāmānuja has done. *Akarma* being distinct from *karma* can mean as *jñāna* of *ātman* in the present context *(akarma śabdena atra karmetarat prastutam ātmajñānam ucyate)*. According to Rāmānuja, this statement "He who sees *akarma* in *karma* and also *karma* in *akarma*" signifies that one should have clear understanding of the real nature of the self even while he is performing actions. Similarly one should be aware of the action involved while engaged in the pursuit of the knowledge of the self (*karmaṇi kriyamāṇe eva ātmajñānam yaḥ paśyet, akarmaṇi ca ātmajñāne vartamāna eva yaḥ karma paśyet*). This explanation is made more explicit by Rāmānuja in the following words. "One can perceive by constant contemplation the truth about the *jīvātman* namely, that the *karma* that is being performed in itself is a form of knowledge. One can also perceive at the same time that this knowledge is also of the form of *karma*, because it is an integral part of *karma-yoga*. Both these—action in the form of knowledge and knowledge in the form of action—are accomplished by contemplation on the true nature of the self, even while *karma* is being performed."[4] The above view is substantiated by the following verse which explains how the *karma* assumes the form of *jñāna*:

> *yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāmasaṁkalpavarjitāḥ*
> *jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇam tam āhuḥ paṇḍitam budhāḥ.* IV.19
>
> He whose all undertakings (the deeds) are free from the desires and thought which cause them (acc. to S and M) or free from desires for fruits and delusion of the body with the self (acc. to R), whose *karmas* (acc. to S), or previous *karmas* in the form of *puṇya* and *pāpa* (acc. to R) are burnt by the fire of knowledge, him the wise call a man of learning.

The implication of this verse, according to Rāmānuja, is that the element of knowledge is involved in the *karma* that is performed by an individual. The word *jñānāgni* here refers to the proper knowledge of the relationship that exists between *karma-yoga* and *jñāna* element involved in it. The performance of *karma-yoga* in the proper spirit without desire for results and also with the full knowledge of the true nature of the self as distinct from the body helps to overcome the *karmas* of the past in the form of *puṇya* and *pāpa*.

According to Madhva, the *jñānī* is freed from the bonds of *karma* by his knowledge of Lord's independent agency in everything that is done by him and that the individual is only his *pratibimba* in his performance.

Śaṁkara's interpretation of the verse does not acknowledge the involvement of *jñāna* element in the form of the contemplation of the true nature of the self in the *karma.* For him *jñānāgni* refers to the perception of inaction (*akarma*) in action (*karma*) and vice versa and that itself is treated as fire because it burns (eradicates) all the *karmas* both prescribed and prohibited.

Regarding Śaṁkara's explanation, it may be observed that the knowledge of the true nature of the self can only remove the ignorance (*avidyā*) but it does not and cannot put an end to all deeds that are performed unless the deeds are regarded as illusory. Besides, *karmāṇi* in this verse do not refer to the deeds but to the bonds of *karma* in the form of bondage. The subsequent verse clarifies the point:

> *tyaktvā karmaphalasaṅgaṁ nityatṛpto nirāśrayaḥ*
> *karmaṇy abhipravṛtto'pi naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ.* IV.20
>
> Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of his action, ever contented with the self and without being dependent on anything (on the transient body), such a person, even though engaged in action, does not do anything.

The significance of the statement that he is not doing any act is, according to Rāmānuja, that such a person is engaged in the practice of *jñāna-yoga.*

For Śaṁkara, it implies that the *karma* performed by a man of knowledge (*viduṣa*) is in reality *akarma,* since he is endowed with the realization of the self as *niṣkriya.*

For Madhva it means that a perfect *karma-yogī* who becomes an *aparokṣa-jñānī* attains the state of mind similar to that of the Lord.

The following verses explain how *karma-yoga* in which *jñāna* is involved secures the vision of the self by removing the bondage:

> *nirāśīr yatacittātmā tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ*
> *śārīram kevalam karma kurvan nā' pnoti kilbiṣam.* IV.21
>
> One who is free from desires, whose intellect and mind is controlled, and who has given up all possessions, does not incur any sin by performing actions by the body alone or bodily work (*śārīram karma*).

Śārīram karma, according to Śaṁkara means work required for the maintenance of the body. For Rāmānuja, it is the work done by body. The next verse says:

> *yadṛcchā lābha saṁtuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsaraḥ*
> *samaḥ siddhau asiddhau ca kṛtvā'pi na nibadhyate.* IV.22
>
> He who is content with whatever comes by chance, who has passed beyond the duality (of pleasure and pain), who is free from jealousy, who remains even-minded in success and failure, such a person is not bound even when he performs actions.

This verse also signifies that such a *karma-yogī*, though devoted to action, escapes from bondage even without the practice of *jñāna-yoga.*

The *Gītā* emphasizes that the *karma* performed in the spirit of *yajña* or sacrifice free from attachments and whose mind is firmly established in the knowledge of the self, becomes free from bondage. The relevant verse reads:

> *gatasaṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthita cetasaḥ*
> *yajñāyā' carataḥ karma samagraṁ pravilīyate.* IV.23
>
> He whose attachments are sundered, who is *mukta* (liberated from bondage) (acc. to S),or liberated from accepting worldly positions (acc. to R) or free from attachment to body, senses etc., (acc. to M) whose mind is firmly established in the knowledge of the self (*jñānavasthitha cetasaḥ*) and who is engaged in the performance of sacrifices etc. (acc. to R) or who does work as a sacrifice (acc. to S), the *karma* is dissolved totally.

The word *karma* is interpreted by Śaṁkara as the deeds. But Rāmānuja, means by *karma*, the past *karma* causing bondage (*bandha hetu bhūtaṁ prācīnam karma*).

The above four verses (IV.20-23), refer to the *karma-yogī* or the one devoted to the performance of *karma,* who is stated to have become free from the bondage without the observance of *jñāna-yoga*, since the practice of *karma-yoga* itself involves the element of *jñāna* or the contemplation of the true nature of the self. But Śaṁkara interprets these verses in favour of a *jñāna-yogī* or one pursuing the path of knowledge and for whom all actions are burnt by the *jñānāgni* or the knowledge of the self. But the subject-matter of this *adhyāya* is mainly *karma-yoga* which is also dealt with in the third *adhyāya* and also in the later vv. 25-32 in which the different types of *karma* to be observed as a *sādhana* are outlined. In this context, the imposition of the theory of *jñāna-yoga* and the cessation of all *karma* as part of *sādhana* for the realization of the spiritual goal do not seem to be appropriate.

In a more specific way, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that not only the Vedic sacrifice that is performed by a *karma-yogī* but also all the actions together with the accessories used for it, including the fire and oblation offered in it, are to be conceived as permeated by Brahman. The relevant verse reads:

> *brahmārpaṇam brahma havir-brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam*
> *brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma karma samādhinā.* IV.24
>
> That by which the offering is given such as the ladle is Brahman, the oblation is Brahman, the fire into which the oblation is made is Brahman, the performer of the sacrifice is himself Brahman, Brahman alone is to be reached by Him who meditates on him in performing the sacrificial deed.

According to Śaṁkara's version, the verse means: Brahman is the offering, Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman, Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action.

The significance of this verse, according to Rāmānuja, is that the person who performs the actions and who develops the understanding that all the factors involved in action are embodiments of Brahman, will surely attain Brahman. Such an action permeated by the thought of Brahman is a form of knowledge and it directly leads to the realization of the self (*jīvātman*), without embarking separately on *jñāna-yoga.* Thus the verse affirms that *karma-yoga* includes in it the element of *jñāna.*

According to Madhva, the statement that everything is Brahman, implies that all things such as offerings, oblations, etc., are dependent on Brahman. A *karma-yogīn* who realizes that all his offerings and oblations are dependent on Brahman will surely attain Brahman.

Śaṁkara's explanation of the verse is radically different from that of Rāmānuja and Madhva. According to him, a person who has realized Brahman sees that the ladle, the oblation offered in the fire, the fire itself and the agent of action, etc., are all Brahman in the sense that apart from Brahman none of these exist. These are illusory similar to the illusory appearance of silver in place of the shell. With the realization of Brahman, all these cease to exist. For one who realizes that all is Brahman, there is no action (*karma*).

This explanation could be justified on the basis of the Advaita doctrine which advocates that Brahman is the sole Reality and everything else other than Brahman is *mithyā*. But the *Gītā* does not teach such a doctrine. Even in the present context, when Arjuna is being instructed about the manner in which *karma-yoga* is to be observed as part of the *sādhana* for liberation, the teaching of *karma* as *akarma* in the sense of it being illusory does not appear to be relevant.

After explaining how *karma* includes in it the element of the knowledge of the self, Lord Kṛṣṇa enumerates the various types of *karma-yoga*, which are to be performed by the *karma-yogin* in accordance with one's liking and capacity (vv. 25-32). These are:

1. Performance of sacrifices in the form of worship of God (*daivam yajñam*), that is, the sacrifice by which deities are adored.
2. Offering of sacrifices into the fire of Brahman (*brahmājñau yajñam*). The *brahmājñau* for Śaṁkara is higher Brahman and *yajña* or sacrifice in it is the offering of the self (Brahman conditioned by *antaḥkaraṇa*). The offering of the self to Brahman is nothing but realization of the identity of the conditioned self with Brahman. For Rāmānuja, the *agni* or fire itself is Brahmāgni and *yajña* means the regular sacrifice with the offering of oblations with the ladle. All these are of the nature of Brahman. For Madhva, *yajña* denotes Viṣṇu, to whom worship is offered through sacrifice.
3. The restraint of sense organs and the withdrawal of the attachment of the senses to the objects of senses. This is also considered as a form of *karma-yoga*.
4. The control of all the functions of the senses and the activities of the vital breath by the mind kindled by knowledge.
5. Offering as a sacrifice, one's material possessions for charity or for worship of God.
6. Observance of austerities as a sacrifice (*tapoyajña*) such as fasting, severe vows, etc.
7. Spiritual pursuits such as going on a pilgrimage to sacred places (*yoga-yajña*).
8. Recitation of Vedic texts and learning their meanings (*svādhyāya-jñāna-yajña*).
9. Practice of breath-control with restriction on food.

Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that all these are different forms of sacrifices, that is, different types of *karma-yoga,* laid down as means of reaching Brahman (individual self acc. to R). The relevant verse reads:

> *evam bahuvidhā yajñā vitatā bramhaṇo mukhe*
> *karmajān viddhi tān sarvān evam jñātvā vimokṣyase.* IV.32
> Thus, many forms of *karma-yoga* are spread out in the face of Brahman (are laid out as means of reaching Brahman). Know that all these are born of *karma*(*karmajān).* If one knows it, he will be freed (from bondage).

The word *karmajān* implies, as explained by Rāmānuja, that all these different types of *karma-yoga* that are to be observed by different individuals in accordance to their capacity and mental disposition, follow along with the observance of the prescribed obligatory deeds (*nitya karmas)* and occasional deeds *(naimittika karmas).*That is, *karma-yoga* is to be observed along with the performance of the prescribed *karmas* in accordance with one's *varṇa and āśrama.* This explanation for the term *karmajān* is not offered either by Śaṁkara or Madhva.

As a logical sequence of the teaching emphasizing the *jñānāṁśa* in *karma-yoga,* Lord Kṛṣṇa tells how the *jñāna-yoga* or the pursuit of the path of knowledge also includes in it the *karma* aspect. This is the view offered by Rāmānuja in the subsequent verses (33-40). But for Śaṁkara, these verses extol *jñāna* understood as the spiritual knowledge leading to *mokṣa* or the realization of the identity of the self and Brahman and that this *jñāna* is superior to *karma-yoga.* The verse reads:

> *śreyān dravyamayāt yajñāt jñānayajñaḥ parantapa*
> *sarvaṁ karmākhilaṁ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate.* IV.33
> Knowledge as a sacrifice is superior to any material sacrifice, O Arjuna, all actions culminate in knowledge.

According to Śaṁkara, *jñāna-yajña* is the knowledge that is equated with *yajña. Dravyamaya yajña* is the regular sacrifice performed in the fire with all the requisite accessories. All actions eventually lead to *jñāna* understood as the realization of the true nature of the self which is the direct means to liberation. Hence knowledge is superior to sacrifice.

For Rāmānuja, *karma-yoga,* which is the subject-matter of discussion has two aspects: *dravyamaya aṁśa* or material accessories and *jñānamaya aṁśa* or the knowledge aspect in the form of the awareness of the true nature of the self. Of these two, the knowledge aspect is of greater importance, since this knowledge is helpful to attain the vision of the self (*ātmāvalokana*) which is the goal of *jñāna-yoga*, according to Rāmānuja. This knowledge aspect contained in the *karma-yoga* is not the *jñāna-yoga* adopted as the *sādhana* for the attainment of the vision of the self. In other words, the *jñāna* that is referred to here is the knowledge about the true nature of the self as taught in the second *adhyāya* (II.17-30) and which is needed for practising *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* as a *sādhana*. Such a knowledge is to be obtained by a person through a man of wisdom by serving him with respect and humility. It is this knowledge that removes delusion and helps to realize the true nature of the self. The relevant verse reads:

> *yaj-jñātvā na punar moham evaṁ yāsyasi pāṇḍava*
> *yena bhūtany aśeṣeṇa drakṣyasy ātmany atho mayi.* IV.35
> When you have known it, you shall not fall again into this delusion, O Pāṇḍava, for by this, you shall see all beings without exception in the self, then in Me.

This verse has different implications for Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja. Śaṁkara emphasizes the identity of the individual self and Brahman by taking the term *jñāna* as the knowledge in the form of the realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman. The true *jñānī*, therefore sees all beings in oneself as in *Īśvara* on the basis of the doctrine of the unity of the self advanced by Advaita Vedānta. But for Rāmānuja and Madhva, *jīvas* are different from Brahman. According to Rāmānuja, the statement, "One will see all beings in Me (*Īśvara*) signifies that all *jīvas* after they have got rid of bondage and attained purity are seen as equal to *Īśvara* in respect of purity. For Madhva, it implies all beings are seen having *Īśvara* as the *antaryāmin* (*yena jñānena mayi ātmā-bhute sarva bhūtāni yathā*). As the doctrine of identity of *jīva* and Brahman is not advocated in the *Gītā*, the interpretation of Śaṁkara is not tenable.

The knowledge of the true nature of the self is described by the *Gītā* as *jñānāgni* or the fire of knowledge, since it is capable of eradicating the *karma* taken in the sense of *puṇya* and *pāpa* accumulated from a beginningless time. The relevant verse reads:

yathai'dhaṁsi samiddho' gnir bhasmasarat kurute' arjuna
jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā. IV.37
As the blazing fire reduces its fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge turns to ashes all *karmas*.

Another verse extols this knowledge:

na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate
tat svayaṁ yoga saṁsiddhaḥ kālena ātmani vindati. IV.38
There is nothing on earth equal in purity to knowledge; he who becomes perfected by *yoga* finds this himself on his own accord in due course.

Here the *jñāna* refers to the *ātmajñāna* or knowledge related to the self. The *yoga* by which one obtains it is *karma-yoga* which includes the *jñāna* element in it. The verse does not refer to either the mere *jñāna-yoga* or mere *karma-yoga.* On the contrary, considering the teaching contained in the earlier verses, it applies to the *karma-yoga* inclusive of *jñāna* element in it. This is evident from the concluding verse of this *adhyāya* in which Arjuna is called upon to practice *karma-yoga* which is the means to the realization of *ātman,* even according to Śaṁkara. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

tasmāt ajñānasaṁbhūtam hṛtsthaṁ jñānāsinā' tmanaḥ
chitvai' nam saṁśayam yogam ātiṣṭho' ttiṣṭha bhārata. IV.42
Therefore cut asunder with the sword of knowledge, this doubt in your heart that is born of ignorance concerning the self. Resort to yoga, and arise O' Bharata (Arjuna).

The word *yoga* is interpreted by Śaṁkara as the performance of *karma* which is a means to the right knowledge (*yogam samyak darśanopāya karmānuṣṭhānam).* For Rāmānuja and Madhva, it is *karmayoga* or *niṣkāmakarma.*

Thus it may be observed that the entire *adhyāya* is mainly concerned with the practice of *karma-yoga* which also includes in it, an element of *jñāna.*

REFERENCES

1. See ŚB, *yo'yam yogaḥ adhyāya dvayena uktaḥ jñānaniṣṭha lakṣaṇaḥ sa saṁnyāsaḥ karmayogopāyaḥ gītāsu sarvāsu ayameva yogaḥ vivakṣito bhagavatā. yasmin vedārthaḥ parisamāptaḥ pravṛtti lakṣaṇaḥ nivṛtti lakṣaṇaśca.*
2. *Yajurveda,* 31-19, *ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate.*
3. MB on *BG,* IV.18.
4. See RB on *BG,* IV.18.

CHAPTER 5

The Theory of *Saṁnyāsa-yoga*

THE fifth *adhyāya* which is generally titled *Saṁnyāsa-yoga* or the theory of renunciation of all deeds (*karma*) deals primarily with the relative importance of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* as the *sādhana* for *mokṣa*. This is evident from the following question posed by Arjuna at the very outset:

> *saṁnyāsam karmaṇaṁ Kṛṣṇa punar-yogaṁ ca śaṁsasi*
> *yacchreya etayor ekaṁ tan me brūhi suniścitam.* V.1
> You praise, O Kṛṣṇa, the renunciation of deeds and again *karma-yoga*. Tell me for certain which one is better of these two.

This question, according to Śaṁkara, is applicable to an unenlightened person or the one who has not realized the Self, who is required to do the *karmas*. An enlightened person, who has already realized the Self by renouncing all the deeds, does not have to do the *karmas*. For the unenlightened person, *karma-yoga* is better than the renunciation of prescribed deeds. Arjuna being such a person is seeking clarification regarding the pathway he has to follow since in the earlier *adhyāyas* the Lord had spoken about both.

According to Rāmānuja, the question is intended to seek clarification regarding the relative importance of *karma-yoga* and *saṁnyāsa* taken in the sense of *jñāna-yoga* to which reference was made in the earlier *adhyāyas*. In the second *adhyāya*, it is said that *karma-yoga* should be practised first by an aspirant for *mokṣa* and that the vision of the self is to be achieved by means of *jñāna-yoga*. Again in the third and fourth *adhyāya*, *karma-yoga* is praised as an easier way of attaining the vision of the self and that even *jñāna-yogin* should resort to *karma-yoga*. Hence the doubt arises as to which of these two is to be preferred to attain the vision of the self in an easier way.

According to Madhva, the query is based on the assumption that there is opposition between *saṁnyāsa* understood in the sense of discharge of one's duty without passion, as worship of God and the performance of *karma* referred to in fourth *adhyāya* . If *saṁnyāsa* is adopted, the waging of the war as a duty (*karma*) stands opposed to it. Hence Arjuna is impelled to seek clarification.

But the explanation of Śaṁkara does not appear to be appropriate if we take into consideration the following verse containing the reply of the Lord:

> *saṁnyāsaḥ karmayogaśca niḥśreyasakarāv ubhau*
> *tayostu karmasaṁnyāsāt karmayogo viśiṣyate.* V.2
> Renunciation of deeds and *karma-yoga,* both lead to the spiritual goal. But, of these two, *karma-yoga* is superior to the renunciation of deeds.

The subsequent verse explains why *karma-yoga* is better than *saṁnyāsa*:

> *jñeyaḥ sa nityasaṁnyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati*
> *nirdvandvo hi mahābāho sukhaṁ bandhāt pramucyate.* V.3
> He who neither hates nor desires and who is hence free from dualities (*sukha* and *duḥkha*) should be regarded as a person who has renounced for ever (*nityasaṁnyāsī*). Hence, he is easily freed from bondage. O Arjuna.

The term *saṁnyāsa* in the verse cannot be taken as total renunciation of all deeds, as understood by Śaṁkara. If that were so, a *karma-yogin* would not be regarded as *nitya-saṁnyāsī.* Nor does it denote asceticism as generally understood since a *karma-yogin* is not necessarily an ascetic. It therefore signifies the abandonment of the attachment to the deeds as an agent of action (*kartā*) and also abandonment of desire for their fruits. That is, *saṁnyāsa* is development of the spirit of renunciation and not the renunciation of the deeds. Such a *saṁnyāsa* is not opposed to *karma-yoga.* Rāmānuja therefore takes the word *saṁnyāsa* to mean *jñāna-yoga,* also known as *sāṁkhya.* Thus, the *Gītā* states that *sāṁkhya-yoga* and *karma-yoga* are not two different pathways.

> *sāṁkhyayogau pṛthag bālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ*
> *ekam apy āsthitaḥ samyag ubhayor vindate phalam.* V.4
> The ignorant speak of *sāṁkhya* and *yoga* as different but not the learned. He who is firmly set in one, attains the fruit of both.

The word *sāṁkhya* means for Śaṁkara the *saṁnyāsa* or the renunciation of action with the knowledge of *ātman* and *yoga* is *karma-yoga* or the disinterested performance of prescribed deeds with the development of mental equanimity (*samatvabuddhi*) by dedicating them to *Īśvara.* For Rāmānuja, *sāṁkhya* and *yoga* stand for *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* respectively. For Madhva, *sāṁkhya* means *ātmajñāna* and *yoga* means *karma-yoga.*

The *Gītā* also points out that the goal attained by *sāṁkhya* and *yoga* are the same:

> *yat sāṁkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṁ tad yogair api gamyate*
> *ekaṁ sāṁkhyaṁ ca yogaṁ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati.* V.5
> The state which is obtained by the *sāṁkhyans* is the same as reached by the *yogins.* He who sees that the *sāṁkhya* and *yoga* are the same, he is truly the wise man.

But the *Gītā* also states that it is difficult to practise *saṁnyāsa* or *jñāna-yoga* without *karma-yoga*:

> *saṁnyāsastu mahābaho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ*
> *yogayukto munir brahma na cirena adhigacchati.* V.6
> *Saṁnyāsa* is difficult to attain without *karma-yoga.* But the sage (*muni*) who follows *yoga* (*karma-yoga*) attains Brahman soon.

While commenting on this verse Śaṁkara makes a distinction between true *saṁnyāsa* (*pāramārthika*) and ordinary *saṁnyāsa.* The former refers to the total renunciation of all deeds combined with the knowledge of true nature of the self, whereas the latter refers to the mere renunciation of the desires for the fruits of actions by dedicating them to *Īśvara. Yoga* is *karma-yoga* or performance of prescribed deeds without the desire for results and by dedicating them to *Īśvara* as contrasted to the mere performance of deeds. It is difficult to attain the true *saṁnyāsa* without the *karma-yoga.* A sage (*muni*) who is engaged in *karma-yoga* and hence absorbed in the contemplation of *Īśvara* is able to attain Brahman, the term *brahman* being interpreted as *saṁnyāsa* or the knowledge of the *Paramātman.* In view of this *karma-yoga* is regarded to be better in so far as it helps to attain *saṁnyāsa.*

According to Rāmānuja, *saṁnyāsa* and *yoga* stand for *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* respectively. A person who practises *karma-yoga* is able to achieve the vision of the self, which is the goal of *jñāna-yoga,* in an easier way since a *karma-yogin* is also engaged in the contemplation of the self. But the person who pursues *jñāna-yoga* by itself, attains the vision of the self after a long time because of the difficulties involved in its practice.

For Madhva, *saṁnyāsa* is the abandonment of *rāga* and *dveṣa*. But this alone cannot secure the *mokṣa* or *aparokṣajñāna*. A *muni* or sage who is regarded as a *saṁnyāsī* attains the spiritual goal without delay, if abandonment of *rāga* and *dveṣa* is combined with *niṣkāmakarma*.

In the context of the relative importance of *saṁnyāsa* and *yoga*, which is the subject-matter of the *adhyāya*, as is evident from the opening verse, the *saṁnyāsa* in the sense of total renunciation of all prescribed deeds even with the knowledge of the *ātmajñāna* cannot serve as the direct means to *mokṣa*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* emphasises the need of the observance of the *karma* to attain the knowledge of Brahman. Based on the Upaniṣadic text,[1] the *Vedāntasūtra*[2] states that *karma* such as the *yajña* are to be observed until one reaches the final goal. The *Gītā* itself in a later *adhyāya* specifically states that *yajña, dāna, tapas,* and *karma* are not to be relinquished but should be performed (*yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyam kāryameva tat*). This point is well brought out by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Thus He says:

> *etāny api tu karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā phalāni ca*
> *kartavyānī'ti me pārtha niścitam matam uttamam.* XVIII.6
> But even these deeds ought to be performed, giving up attachment and desire for fruits. This, O Pārtha (Arjuna), is my decided and final view.

In view of these facts, it is appropriate to regard *saṁnyāsa* as *jñāna-yoga*, as conceived by Rāmānuja, since it presupposes both *tyāga* or abandonment of desire for fruits and non-attachment to *karma* along with constant meditation on the self.

The need of the observance of the prescribed deeds as part of the *sādhana* for *mokṣa* is further stressed by highlighting the greatness of *karma-yoga*:

> *yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ*
> *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvann api na lipyate.* V.7
> He who follows *yoga* and is pure in mind, who has subdued his self and conquered the senses and whose self has become the self of all beings, he is not tainted, though he is engaged.

The word *yogayukta* means for Śaṁkara one who has adopted *karma-yoga* as a means to the knowledge of the self, which is true *yoga*, by dedicating the deeds to *Īśvara* and being free from desire for results. Such a person sees his own self as the self of other individuals (*sarvabhūtātmabhutātmā*). He is *samyagdarśī* or one having true knowledge of the self.

For Rāmānuja, *yogayukta* means one who is engaged in the performance of the deeds prescribed by the *śāstra* which are of the nature of the propitiation of the Supreme Person (*paramapuruṣa ārādhanarūpaṁ viśuddhaṁ karmaṇi vartamānaḥ*). Hence he becomes purified and his senses and mind are controlled. Such a person who contemplates on the self realizes that the selves of all individuals, are of the same nature, when they are disassociated from the physical body. This is the implication of *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā.* This interpretation denies the unity of the self, as stated by Śaṁkara, since *jīvātmans* are many, according to the Upaniṣads and also the *Gītā.*

For Madhva also *jīvātmans* are many and differ from each other. *Sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā* means one to whom the Supreme Being, who as the main source of all activities of beings, remains close to him as the prime mover of all his activities.

The *Gītā* further points out that a *karma-yogin* who has a true knowledge of the self (*tattvavit*) thinks that he is doing nothing at all even though his sense organs are functioning through the cognitive and conative activities by thinking that only the senses are occupied with their respective objects. The person who acts without attachment and by reposing all actions on Brahman (God acc.to S and *prakṛti*, acc.to R) is not touched by sin, even as a lotus leaf is untouched by water. The relevant verse reads:

brahmaṇy ādhāya karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ
lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram iva ambhasā. V.10

The word *brahma* here is interpreted as *prakṛti* by Rāmānuja, since in the present context this meaning is appropriate. Besides, in a later *adhyāya*, the *Gītā* also uses *brahma* in the sense of *prakṛti* (*mama yoniḥ mahat brahma*). For Śaṁkara and Madhva, this word stands for God.

The *Gītā* also states that the *yogī* (the observer of *karma-yoga*) performs deeds merely with the body, mind, intellect and senses for the purification of the mind.

Another verse mentions that the *yogī* who has renounced the fruits of actions attains the lasting peace.

yuktaḥ karmaphalam tyaktvā śāntim āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm
ayuktaḥ kāma kāreṇa phale sakto nibadhyate. V.12

A *yogī* (*karma-yogin*) who has abandoned the attachment to the fruits attains the everlasting peace. But the unsteady person who is attached to the fruits of action, being impelled by desire, is bound. The word *naiṣṭhiki śānti* in the verse is taken by Śaṁkara as *mokṣa,* whereas it means for Rāmānuja, blissful experience of *jīvātma.*

All these verses (V.7-12) related to the *karma-yoga* as part of the *sadhana* for *mokṣa* reveal that the *Gītā* does not advocate the renunciation of the prescribed deeds. But on the contrary, it tells us to perform the prescribed deeds by dedicating them to *Īśvara* and abandon attachment to them and also the desire for their fruits. This is the significance of *saṁnyāsa* or the renunciation of attachment. Such a *saṁnyāsa* is not inconsistent with *karma-yoga.* But Śaṁkara, however, brings in the theory of *karma-saṁnyāsa* or the renunciation of all deeds as a requisite for the attainment of *jñānaniṣṭhatva* or steadfastness in the knowledge of the Self. Thus he states in his commentary on the v. V.12: *satva śuddhi, jñānaprāpti, sarva-karmasaṁnyāsa, jñānaniṣṭha, krameṇa iti vākya śeṣaḥ.* It means: "It is to be understood that he (*yuktaḥ*) attains this goal through the following stages: (a) purification of mind, (b) acquisition of knowledge, (c) renunciation of all deeds, and (d) steadfastness in knowledge. This view is based on the premise that knowledge and *karma* are opposed to each other and that *jñāna* or the realization of the identity of self and Brahman (*ātmaikya jñāna*) which is the direct means to *mokṣa* does not require the performance of deeds. Whether or not this theory is supported by the *Gītā* and also the Upaniṣads needs to be considered. According to Rāmānuja and Madhva, the *Gītā* does not support it. We shall discuss this issue in the chapter on General Evaluation.

The *Gītā* explains how the *karma-yogin* who is engaged in action is regarded as a *saṁnyāsī* by resigning all actions as belonging to the body along with its sensory and motor functions. He realizes by discriminating knowledge that all his actions are due to the association of the self with the body and the senses, while the pure self when disassociated with the body is not the agent of action. The relevant verse reads:

sarvakarmāṇi manasā saṁnyāsyāste sukhaṁ vaśī
navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan na kārayan. V.13

The meaning of the verse, acc. to S is:

"The embodied person who has controlled his senses, having renounced all actions by the mind, dwells at ease in the city of nine gates (body), without doing or causing others to do anything at all."

Acc. to R it means:

"The embodied self (*dehī*) mentally surrendering all actions as belonging to the city of nine gates (body) and becoming self-controlled dwells happily, neither himself acting nor causing the body to act."

The implication of the verse, according to Śaṁkara, is that one who has already renounced all actions—*nitya, naimittika* and *kāmya*—through discriminating wisdom (*manasā*), that is, by seeing inaction in action as a result of the realization of the true nature of the self as distinct from the aggregate body, rests happily in the body due to the persistence of the trace of the *prārabdha karma.*

For Rāmānuja, *sarva karma-saṁnyāsa manasā* referred to in this verse does not imply the renunciation of all the deeds, but it signifies that the self associated with the body surrenders all actions as belonging to the body by realizing the fact that these actions are due to the association of the self with the body, which is the product of previous *karma* and that these are not caused by the self itself existing in its true nature without the body (*ātmanaḥ prācīna mūla karma deha saṁbandhaprayuktam idam karmaṇām kartṛtvam na svarūpa prayuktam*). The self therefore can rest in the body without any identification with the bodily activities.

Madhva maintains the view that the self is not only *not* an independent agent, but is also not independent causative principle (*kārayitā*) either.

The word *manasā saṁnyāsya* signifies for Madhva, that the *karma-yogin* surrenders his personal or egoistic involvement (*abhimāna*) in the execution of the prescribed deeds and not total renunciation of all deeds. Thus, for both Rāmānuja and Madhva, the *yogī* does not renounce all deeds.

The subsequent verse supports the explanation adopted by Rāmānuja:

na kartṛtvam na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ
na karmaphalasaṁyogaṁ svabhāvastu pravartate. V.14

The Lord of the body does not create for the living beings of the world either the agency (*kartṛtvam*) or *karmas* (objects of pleasure, acc. to S), or actions (acc. to R), nor does he connect the works with their fruits. It is the *svabhāva* which means one's own nature characterised by *māyā* (acc. to S), or inherent *vāsanās* of the past (acc. to R), or the self-existent God (acc. to M).

The word *prabhu,* which means the Lord, refers to *ātman,* the Supreme Self, which is the same as Brahman for Śaṁkara. For Rāmānuja, it means the Lord of the body, i.e., *jīvātman.* So also Madhva takes it as *jīva* (*prabhurhi jīvo jaḍam apekṣya*). The term *svabhāva* means for Śaṁkara, *prakṛti,* which is *māyā.* Rāmānuja takes it as the *vāsanās* or inherent tendencies of the past life. For Madhva it refers to *Paramātman* (*svayameva bhavati bhāvayati ca, svabhāva*). But, in the context of *karma-yoga* and renunciation of the deeds (*karma-saṁnyāsa*), it is more appropriate to take the word *prabhu* in the sense of the Lord of the body, i.e. *jīvātman* and *svabhāva* as the innate tendencies which directly cause actions.

The present verse, prima facie, appears to deny *kartṛtva* to *ātman.* This would go against the teaching of the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra,* which affirm that *jīva* is *kartā.* The *Praśna Upaniṣad* says, *eṣa hi kartā....* The *Vedāntasūtra* states: *kartā śāstrarthavatvāt. Jīva* is *kartā,* as otherwise the scriptural injunctions enjoining the performance of deeds would be meaningless. In conformity with the Vedānta teachings, the denial of *kartṛva* is to be explained. Śaṁkara attempts to explain it by advancing the theory of *avidyā. Kartṛtva* which is the function of the *buddhi* caused by *māyā* is superimposed on the self due to ignorance, while the self itself is free from *kartṛtva.* This view would be justified if the doctrine of *māyā* and the theory of *jīvātman* as the conditioned self were established. But these theories are not supported by the *Gītā.* Madhva explains the *kartṛtva* of *jīva* by attributing the primary agency to the Supreme Lord, who as the independent Reality is the main *kartā* (*pradhāna kartā*), while *jīva* as an absolutely dependent reality, derives its capacity to act from *Īśvara.* But the Upaniṣads and *Vedāntasūtra* attribute *kartṛtva* directly to *jīvātman.* If *jīva* were not a *kartā,* and if it did not have any freedom to act, the action as well as its result would become applicable to *Īśvara.* Philosophically this is not a sound theory. *Jīva* is therefore to be admitted as a *kartā,* even though the mental and physical capacity to function is endowed by *Īśvara.*

Rāmānuja offers a satisfactory explanation. The denial of *kartṛtva* in the present verse implies that *kartṛtva* caused by *karma* does not belong to the self in its true nature as dissociated with the physical body(*na svarūpa prayuktam*). That is, *jīvātman* in its true nature is not subject to any *karma.* It is *akarmavaśya* and hence it does not cause any action by itself. Only when it is associated with the body and the sense organs, it functions through its attributive *jñāna* (*dharmabhūta jñāna*). The mental and physical activities are all influenced by the innate *vāsanās* inherited from the previous births from a beginningless time. *Jīva* is regarded as *kartā* as it is the *āśraya* or the substrate for the *kṛti* or effort (*kriyāśraya*). Effort is caused by a desire (*icchā*) to do an act. It is therefore a mental modification or *avasthā* of *jñāna.* The *jīva* being a substrate for *kriyā* is not affected by the modifications of the *jñāna,* just as the changes taking place in the body do not affect the self. The merit of this theory will be discussed in detail in the chapter on General Evaluation.

The *Gītā* also points out that the *jīvātman* in its true nature does not take on the sin (*pāpa*) or the merit (*puṇya*) of any one else. This is due to the fact that it is not restricted to a particular body. As it is monadic in nature (*aṇu*), it is capable of entering and abiding in all kinds of bodies in accordance with the past *karma.* It is in this sense the *Gītā* regards it as *vibhu.* The *puṇya* and *pāpa* of the individuals which cause the *sukha* or *duḥkha* are the result of the innate *vāsanās* inherited from the past lives and these belong to the bodies of the respective persons. Hence the *jīva* in its true nature is not affected by them. This is the explanation of Rāmānuja.

According to Śaṁkara, the term *vibhu* means all-pervasive and it is applicable to *Paramātman* who in actual reality neither partakes the sin of somebody nor his merit. Nevertheless people offer worship to the Lord due to ignorance (*ajñāna*) and He accepts them. From the standpoint of transcendental Reality (*pāramārthika*), all these notions of acceptance of offerings are due to *ajñāna.*

Rāmānuja and Madhva do not accept the theory of *avidyā* in the sense in which Śaṁkara understands and also two levels of reality as *pāramārthika* and *vyāvahārika.* They offer different explanation. Our knowledge is eclipsed by the *avidyā* in the form of *karma* of the previous births and this causes the delusion of the body itself as the self. We therefore think that the *jīvas* experience the *puṇya* or *pāpa* of oneself or of others.

How is this *ajñāna* to be removed? The *Gītā* replies:

jñānena tu tad-ajñānaṁ yeṣāṁ nāśitamātmanaḥ
teṣām ādityavat jñānaṁ prakāśayati tat param. V.16

But for those in whom ignorance is destroyed by the knowledge of the self, their knowledge, like the sun, reveals that Supreme Reality. This is the meaning according to Śaṁkara, since the word *tat-param* is taken as the Supreme Self. Madhva also interprets it in the sense of Supreme Being. Rāmānuja, however, means it as the supreme *jñānaṁ* (*tat param jñānam*) or the knowledge in its natural form non-eclipsed by ignorance in the form of *karma*. This explanation is sounder because the knowledge which is eclipsed by *ajñāna* should manifest itself in its natural form with the removal of *ajñāna*. If *jñāna* in the present verse is understood as the very Brahman, as Śaṁkara interprets, the question of its being revealed by the verbal or mediate knowledge (*parokṣa jñāna*) does not arise since it is always self-manifest. For Rāmānuja, *jñāna* is an esssential attribute of *jīvātman* and it is eclipsed by *ajñāna* in the form of past *karma*. Hence with the removal of *ajñāna*, *jñāna* manifests itself in its true form. The analogy of the sun and its rays cited in the verse supports the explanation of Rāmānuja. The sun along with its rays shines fully when the darkness enveloping it is removed. In the same way, knowledge as an attribute of the self which was eclipsed by *karma* reveals itself in its true form.

After emphasising the importance of the removal of *ajñāna* by *jñāna*, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna how one should endeavour to attain the vision of the self.

tadbuddhyas tadātmānas tanniṣṭhas tatparāyaṇāḥ
gacchanty apunarāvṛttim jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ. V.17

Those who are determined to have the vision of the self (*tadbuddhayaḥ*), their mind being directed towards the self (*tadātmānaḥ*), they should focus on the self as their goal and be deeply absorbed in the meditation on the self. Such persons are able to remove the impurities of the mind persisting from the past lives. They would then be able to reach the state from which there is no return to the mundane existence.

This is the meaning of the verse according to Rāmānuja. This explanation is justified if we acknowledge the fact that in the context of the *karma-yoga* vis-à-vis *jñāna-yoga* or the knowledge of the true nature of the self (*jīvātman*), meditation on *jīvātman* leading to its vision as the goal appears appropriate. The meditation on Brahman or *Paramātman* leading to *mokṣa* comes up in the later *adhyāyas*

(VII-XII). The non-return to bondage (*apunarāvṛtti*) referred in the verse as the goal is also possible, according to Rāmānuja, for the *jñāna yogin* attaining the direct vision of the *jīvātman*. The subsequent verses and also *adhyāya* VI deal with the *jñāna-yoga* leading to the *ātmāvalokana*. If *jīvātman* is different from Brahman, the meditation on *jīvātman* which is *jñāna-yoga* cannot be the direct means to the attainment of *Paramātman* or Brahman. For Śaṁkara, *jīva* and Brahman are identical and hence *jñāna-yoga* leading to the realization of *ātman* is itself the direct means to *mokṣa*. Whether or not this theory is tenable according to the teachings of the *Gītā* will be discussed in the chapter on General Evaluation.

According to Madhva, this verse refers to the meditation on *Paramātman* after obtaining the verbal knowledge of *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* through *śravaṇa* and *manana* as indicated in the preceding verse (V.16). Such a meditation is the direct means to *aparokṣa jñāna* through which *mokṣa* is attained.

A few verses (V.18-25) describe the characteristics of the *yogīs* who have realized the *ātman* (acc.to S) or who have known the true nature of *jīvātman* (acc.to R) or who have had the direct intuition of *Paramātman* (*aparokṣa-jñāna*), acc. to Madhva. Thus it says:

> *vidyāvinayasampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini*
> *śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ.* V.18
>
> The men of wisdom look upon with equanimity a Brahmin endowed with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant and even a dog as well as an eater of dog's meat.

The word *samadarśin* is open to different interpretation. Śaṁkara, who upholds the doctrine of *ātmādvaita* or the unity of the selves, interprets it in the sense that the sage who has realized the *ātman* sees the selves in all the beings as the same. That is, the Supreme Brahman is the same in all beings. The differences we see in them relate to their names and forms.

For Rāmānuja, the individual selves are many and also different from each other. The *samatva-darśana* therefore signifies that a wise man who has known the true nature of the self sees that the individual selves of all living beings, though they are dissimilar in respet of their bodies, are same in respect of their intrinsic nature viz., *jñāna* and *ānanda*. The dissimilarity observed in respect of the individuals are due to the variation of the physical bodies assumed by the selves in accordance with their *karma*. This explanation is sound since both the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* teach the plurality of the selves.

Madhva offers a theological explanation which does not appear to be relevant to the context of the meditation on *jīvātman.* According to him the *yogī* with a spiritual outlook recognises that God pervades all beings with his presence in an equal measure, regardless of their high or low status in life.

The subsequent verse extols the *samadarśin* as the one who has conquered the bondage and established in Brahman:

> *ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣām sāmye sthitaṁ manaḥ*
> *nirdoṣam hi samaṁ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ.* V.19
> Even here (on earth) *saṁsāra* is overcome by those whose minds rest in equality. For, the Brahman (*jīva* acc.to R) is flawless (not affected by *prakṛti,* acc.to R). Therefore they abide in Brahman (*jīva* acc. to R).

The important statement in this verse is "*nirdoṣam hi samaṁ brahma.*" On the face of it, it means that Brahman who is defectless is same in all, as Śaṁkara understands. Madhva also takes it in a similar sense as the uniform presence of Brahman in all beings irrespective of their status. This would have been the case if one had embarked on the meditation of *Paramātman* and attained His *sākṣātkāra.* But in the present and previous *adhyāyas* Lord Kṛṣṇa is teaching about the *karma-yoga* and *saṁnyāsa-yoga,* the goal of which is the vision of the *jīvātman.* In this context, it is but appropriate to interpret the term *brahma* in the sense of *jīvātman,* as Rāmānuja has stated. The expression "*samaṁ brahma*" suggesting equality is therefore to be understood that the *jīvas* are same in respect of their intrinsic nature when it is totally freed from the association of body. If we admit that *jīvātman* is identical with Brahman, the realization of *ātman* would imply Brahman. But this doctrine of identity is not supported by the *Gītā.*

Another verse specifically mentions that a *yogī* having become Brahman attains *brahmanirvāṇa*:

> *yo' ntaḥsukho' ntarātmas tathā' ntarjyotir eva yaḥ*
> *sa yogī brahmanirvāṇaṁ brahmabhūto' dhigacchati.* V.24
> He who finds his happiness within and so also his joy within, that *yogī* having become Brahman attains the beatitude (bliss) of Brahman.

It is possible to interpret the term *brahma* in this verse in favour of the Supreme Being, if the *ātman* within oneself is also taken as Brahman. This is not so, according to Rāmānuja. The happiness and joy derived by the *yogī* can emanate from the contemplation of *jīvātman* which is essentially of the nature of bliss. Hence consistent with the explanation offered on the earlier verses referring to *brahma* as *jīvātman*, in the context of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, Rāmānuja justifiably explains that the *karma-yogin* who has realized the true nature of the *jīvātman* experiences its bliss. This is the implication of *Brahmabhūta* attaining *brahmanirvāṇam* (*ātmānubhava-sukhaṁ*).

The following verses, which describe briefly the method of attaining the goal of the vision of *ātman* substantiates the stance taken by Rāmānuja. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna how one should practise *yoga* to attain the vision of the self:

> *sparśān kṛtvā bahirbāhyāṁś cakṣuś cai'vā' ntare bhruvoḥ*
> *prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau.* V.27
> *yatendriya manobuddhir munir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ*
> *vigateccā bhaya krodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ.* V.28
>
> Shutting out all external objects, fixing the gaze between the eyebrows, making even the inward and outward breaths moving in the nostrils, the sage who has controlled the senses, mind and intellect who is intent on attaining liberation, who has cast away desires, fear and anger, is liberated for ever.

This description actually corresponds to the yoga practice which is to be adopted as a *sādhana* for attaining the vision of the self. The same yoga practice is also to be adopted as part of the *bhakti-yoga* to attain *Paramātman*. Since the subsequent *adhyāya* (VI) deals with the details of this spiritual discipline known as *dhyāna-yoga* for the attainment of the vision of the self, it is but appropriate that these verses speaking of attainment of *brahma* and *bramhanirvāṇa* are interpreted, as pointed out by Rāmānuja, in favour of the attainment of the vision of *jīvātman* rather than *Paramātman*.

The concluding verse of the *adhyāya* refers to a few important characteristics of *Paramātman*. He is described as one who is the enjoyer of all *yajñas* and austerities (*bhoktāram yajñatapasāṁ*). He is the Supreme Lord of all the worlds (*sarvaloka maheśvaram*). He is the friend of all beings (*suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ*). This is the form in which one should think of God while observing *karma-yoga* for easy success in the endeavour. This description of *Paramātman* by

Lord Kṛṣṇa coming at the end of the *adhyāya* is not to be construed that all references to *brahma* in earlier verses also refer to *Paramātman*, as claimed by the followers of Madhva.

REFERENCES

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (hereinafter cited as *Bṛ.Up.*), IV.4.22, *tametam vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇāḥ vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasā anaśakena.*
2. *VS*, III.4.26, *sarvāpekṣā ca yajñādiśruteḥ aśvavat.*

CHAPTER 6

The Theory of *Dhyāna*-yoga

THE sixth *adhyāya* is titled *dhyāna-yoga.* It primarily deals with the practice of *dhyāna* or meditation for achieving the spiritual goal. For Śaṁkara, the spiritual goal is direct realization of the *ātman*, which is the same as Brahman. The *karma-yoga* taught in the earlier chapters is an aid to *dhyāna-yoga* and the person who has embarked on *dhyāna-yoga* is not required to perform the prescribed deeds. The realization of the identity of the self with Brahman (*ātmabrahmaikya jñāna*) through the *dhyāna-yoga* is the direct means to total liberation.

Rāmānuja and Madhva differ in their views regarding this matter. For Rāmānuja, the goal to be attained either by *karma-yoga* or *dhyāna-yoga,* also known as *jñāna-yoga,* is the vision of *jīvātman* (*pratyagātma darśana*). Both *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are subsidiary means to *bhakti-yoga* which directly leads to final liberation.

For Madhva, *dhyāna-yoga* which is named as *samādhi-yoga* is the means to *aparokṣa jñāna* leading to final liberation. *Karma-yoga* as *niṣkāma karmānuṣṭhāna* along with *saṁnyāsa* in the sense of renunciation of passion and prejudices serves as an aid to *samādhi-yoga.*

With this background of diverse views of the principal commentators, we have to examine the relevant verses of sixth *adhyāya* to determine the role of *karma* and *jñāna* as part of the *sādhana* for *mokṣa* and also whether the goal of *dhyāna-yoga* is the vision of the *jīvātman.* This is an important subject in the Vedānta and the views of the commentators have to be evaluated with reference to the Upaniṣadic texts and the *Vedāntasūtra* bearing on the subject.

The opening verses of the *adhyāyas* VI.1–10 refer to the *karma-yoga* vis-à-vis the *saṁnyāsa* taught in the preceding chapters in order to stress its importance for the spiritual goal. At first Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna:

anāśritaḥ karma-phalam kāryam karma karoti yaḥ
sa saṁnyāsī ca yogī ca na niragniḥ na ca akriyaḥ. VI.1

He who performs the deeds that ought to be done without seeking their fruits is the *saṁnyāsī* and also a *yogī,* and not the one who does not light the sacred fire, and performs no rites at all.

This verse as it reads conveys the idea that *karma-yogī* who is regarded as a *saṁnyāsī* is not required to renounce the performance of the deeds. In other words, there is no opposition between *karma-yoga* and *saṁnyāsa-yoga.* This is the view advanced both by Rāmānuja and Madhva. But Śaṁkara maintains that the *karma-yogī* is regarded as a *saṁnyāsī* and also a *yogī* only in a figurative (secondary) sense because he performs *karma* only as a means of *yoga* and also abandons the thoughts concerning the fruits of actions which cause the unsteadiness of mind. But in reality a true *saṁnyāsī* is one who has renounced the performance of all deeds. Śaṁkara, thus emphasizes that the *karma-saṁnyāsa* or the renouncement of prescribed deeds is essential for *dhyāna-yoga.*

The second verse clarifies the position. It says:

yaṁ saṁnyāsam iti prāhur yogaṁ taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava
na hy asaṁnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana. VI.2

That which is called *saṁnyāsa* (*jñāna-yoga*) (acc. to R), know that to be *yoga* (*karma-yoga*). O Arjuna, no one becomes a *yogī* (*karma-yogī*) who has not renounced thoughts (attachment to the body, acc. to R).

This verse reveals that *saṁnyāsa* is not opposed to *karma,* since a *karma-yogī* is required to renounce only the *saṁkalpa* but not the performance of deeds. *Saṁkalpa* is explained by Śaṁkara as thought of all actions and their results. For Rāmānuja it means delusion of the body as the self. That is, one who practises *karma-yoga* is also engaged in the contemplation of the true nature of the self and as such he does not have the delusion of the body as the soul (*anātmani prakṛtau ātma saṁkalpaḥ*). This meaning adopted for *asaṁnyasta saṁkalpa* is justified if it is admitted that *karma-yoga* also involves in it an element of *jñāna* or knowledge of *ātman.*

In interpreting this verse, Śaṁkara explains that *saṁnyāsī* in its true sense (*parmārtha saṁnyāsī*) is one who gives up all actions and their results. In other words, the term *saṁnyāsa* is applicable to an ascetic who has totally renounced the performance of all deeds and not merely the renunciation of the attachments to actions and desires for their results. If *karma-yogī* is also regarded as *saṁnyāsī,* it is due to the fact that the renunciation of the thoughts in respect of the results is a common feature between *karma-yogī* and *saṁnyāsī.* But in reality, a true *saṁnyāsī* has nothing to do with *karma,* whereas a *karma-yogī* is fully engaged in it. The two paths are therefore meant for two different categories of individuals namely, *karma-yoga* for *gṛhasthas* or householders and *saṁnyāsa* for the ascetics. But Madhva and Rāmānuja do not accept this view, since according to the *Gītā,* there is no opposition between *karma* and *saṁnyāsa* as explained in the first two verses. A *jñāna-yogī* or follower of *dhyāna-yoga* is only required to renounce the desires for the results of *karma* but not the actual performance of prescribed deeds.

The following verse clarifies when the *karma* can be given up:

> *ārurukṣor-muner-yogaṁ karma kāraṇam ucyate*
> *yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate.* VI.3
>
> Action (*karma*) is said to be the means for the sage who seeks to reach the goal of *yoga;* but when he has reached the goal, tranquillity of mind is spoken of as the means.

This verse acknowledges two stages in the practice of the spiritual discipline laid down for attaining liberation. The first is *ārurukṣu* or an aspirant who wishes to attain the goal. The second is *yogārūḍha* or the one who has attained the goal. According to this verse, *karma* or the observance of *karma-yoga* is required for the first category of persons. For one who has achieved the goal, what is needed is *śama* or tranquillity of mind. According to Śaṁkara, the first category of the persons are those who are not fully qualified to practise *dhyāna-yoga.* They are therefore required to observe the *karma* by abandoning the desire for fruits and thereby gain purity of mind to become fit for *dhyāna-yoga.* For those who are qualified for *dhyāna-yoga,* they need to cultivate *śama* or tranquillity of mind. *Śama,* according to Śaṁkara, implies total renunciation of the performance of deeds (*upaśamaḥ sarva karmabhyaḥ nivṛttiḥ*).

Whether or not *sama* implies total renunciation of *karmas* is open to dispute. Both the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and the *Vedāntasūtra* based on it prescribe *śama* as one of the pre-requisites for the *upāsanā* (acc. to R), and knowledge of Brahman (acc. to S). It does not imply the total renunciation of all *karmas,* unless it is established that *niṣkāma karma* is opposed to *jñāna.* It is not so. Hence Rāmānuja explains this verse in a different way. That *karma-yoga* is the means to *jñāna-yoga* which is adopted by the seekers of *mokṣa* (*arurukṣuḥ*) is not disputed. But in the case of the *yogārūḍha,* the one who has attained the goal of *yoga* (the vision of the self), he ceases to perform the deeds since he is already absorbed in the bliss of the *ātman* and consequently there would be no need to perform *karma* for the purpose of attaining the spiritual goal. This does not mean, as some critics point out, that Rāmānuja advocates the renunciation of all the deeds for a *jñāna-yogī.* As will be made clear in later *adhyāyas,* Rāmānuja emphasises the need of performance of *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* by one pursuing *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and also *bhakti-yoga,* until one is disembodied and attains the *mokṣa.* The *Vedāntasūtra* also supports this view. The *sūtra* says: *sarvāpekṣa ca yajñadiśruteḥ aśvavat.* It means that *yajña* etc., enjoined in the scriptures are required until one reaches the destination, namely total liberation, just as the horse intended for moving from one place to the other is used along with the accessories until the destination is reached. The *Gītā* also states explicitly that *yajña, dāna, tapas,* etc., are not to be given up (*yajña dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyam kāryam eva ca*). It does not make any distinction between two exclusive categories of aspirants for *mokṣa,* one as *jñānaniṣṭha* and another as *karmaniṣṭha,* as Śaṁkara maintains. The two pathways, *karma* and *jñāna,* are complementary.

Madhva also maintains the need of *niṣkāma karma* as indispensable for *dhyāna-yoga* without making any distinction between *jñānaniṣṭha* and *karmaniṣṭha.* According to him, the *dhyāna-yoga* is a vital part of *karma-yoga* itself and is not opposed to it. However, he defines *yogārūḍha* as one who has ascended in *yoga* and who has obtained direct intuition of Brahman (*aparokṣa-jñānī*). Accordingly the term *śama* is interpreted as concentration on God (*bhagavān-niṣṭatā buddhiḥ*) and this becomes the source (*kāraṇam*) for infinite bliss for him (*yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamo bhagavānniṣṭatā buddhiḥ parama sukha kāraṇam ucyate*).

Whatever may be the merit of this explanation, we have to consider whether the *dhyāna-yoga* outlined in the sixth *adhyāya,* which is not different from *jñāna-yoga* as understood by Rāmānuja, and the *saṁnyāsa-yoga* as conceived by Śaṁkara, leads to the state of *samādhi* resulting in the direct vision of *Paramātman.* There is no specific indication in this *adhyāya* about the meditation on *Paramātman* except in the last verse in which the word "*bhajate*" meaning meditation on *Paramātman* is employed (*śraddhāvan bhajate yo māṁ*). In the earlier verses, *Paramātman* is referred to only in connection with the dedication of all deeds to *Īśvara* as part of *karma-yoga.* Both according to the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra,* Brahman or *Paramātman* can be attained only through the *upāsanā* or *vidyā* (*vidyātaḥ puruṣārthaḥ*).[1] The theory of meditation on God with devotion is fully discussed in the subsequent *adhyāyas* (VII-XII). If the *ātman* referred to in the earlier *adhyāyas* is identical with Brahman, as is maintained by Śaṁkara, it is possible to admit *Paramātma sākṣātkāra* through *dhyāna-yoga* since the realization of *ātman* is same as *Paramātman.* But the theory of *Brahmātmaikya* is not acceptable to Madhva. According to him *jīvātman* is distinct from *Paramātman.* The term *ātman* no doubt denotes both *jīvātman* and *Paramātman,* depending on the context in which it is used. In the second *adhyāya, ātman* generally stands for *jīvātman* in the context of the teaching of the distinction between the *jīva* and the physical body for the purpose of removing the *dehātma-bhrama* of Arjuna. In view of all these considerations, Rāmānuja has maintained consistently that the words such as *brahma, ātmā, brahma-nirvāṇa,* etc., employed in the first *ṣaṭka* denotes *jīvātman.* On the basis of this stand taken by Rāmānuja, it is appropriate to maintain that the goal of *jñāna-yoga* or *dhyāna-yoga* as outlined in the sixth *adhyāya* is the direct vision of *jīvātman* (*ātmāvalokana*) and not *Paramātma sākṣātkāra.* This conclusion becomes evident from the subsequent verse in which the term "*yogārūḍha*" is explained.

> *yada hi ne'ndriyārtheṣu na karmasu anuṣajjate*
> *sarvasaṁkalpasaṁnyāsī yogārūḍhas tado' cyate.* VI.4
>
> When one does not get attached to the objects of senses and the activities connected with them, and consequently has abandoned all desires, then he is said to have attained the goal of yoga (*yogārūḍhaḥ*).

In this verse the *yogārūḍha* is described as *sarvasaṁkalpa-saṁnyāsī.* This word read with the first line of the verse implies the abandonment of all attachment to sense objects and also to the works. It does not mean the renunciation of all the prescribed deeds by the *yogī.* But Śaṁkara interprets *sarvasaṁkalpa-saṁnyāsa* as the renunciation of not only all desires for sense objects but also all *karmas* viz., *nitya, naimittika, kāmya* and *pratiṣiddha.* But the word *anuṣajjate,* which means loosing the attachment, implies that a *karma-yogī* should get himself detached from the sense objects and *karmas.* The *karmas* for which detachment is called upon do not refer to the *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* because these being mandatory for the *yogī,* he has not developed any attachment to them and as such the question of renouncing them does not arise. Nor do they refer to the *karmas* such as *agnihotra* prescribed for an orthodox person, since these too being mandatory, there is no attachment to them and hence these too are not required to be renounced.[2] On the contrary, the *karmas* for which detachment is to be developed refer to the prohibited acts intended for the material benefits (*ātmavyatirikta prākṛta viṣaya tatsaṁbandhiṣu karmasu*).

According to Madhva, *sarvasaṁkalpa-saṁnyāsa* means surrendering one's *saṁkalpa* or will to *Paramātman.* It is the recognition of the fact that the will of the individual operates only subject to the Divine will. It does not envisage the total cessation of all activities.

A few more verses (VI.5-9) describe the characteristics of the *yogārūḍha* and these emphasize the control of the mind for the success of *yoga* more than the renunciation of the *karmas.* One of the verses says:

> *uddhared ātmanā ātmānaṁ na ātmānaṁ avasādayet*
> *ātmai'va hy ātmano bandhur ātmai'va ripur ātmanaḥ.* VI.5
> One should raise (attain) the self by means of the mind and not let the self sink down. For, the mind alone is the friend of the self and the mind alone is the foe of the self. The words *ātmā* and *ātmanā* refer to the self of the individual and the mind respectively.

Another verse specifically states:

> *jitātmānaḥ praśāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ*
> *śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ.* VI.7
> It means acc.to S, "One who has control over the aggregate of his body and organs and who is tranquil, his Supreme Self (*Paramātmā*) becomes manifest (*samāhitaḥ*). He is equipoised in the midst of cold and heat, happiness and sorrow, as also honour and dishonour."

Acc. to R, it means: "For him whose mind is conquered and who is serene, unaffected by heat and cold, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, his self (the word *paramātmā* interpreted as the individual self) is well set for experiencing clear vision (*samāhitaḥ* or *vīsadānusandhāna yogyaḥ*).

Acc. to M, the verse means that for one who has conquered the mind and is calm, the Supreme Lord (*Paramātmā*) comes to be well established in the heart of the *jñānī* (*hṛdi sannihito bhavati*). That is, he becomes an *aparokṣa jñānī*.

Though the phrase *Paramātmā samāhitaḥ* is interpreted differently, *jitātmatva* or the control of the mind is emphasized as the characteristic feature of the *yogārūḍha* and there is no mention of the renunciation of the deeds by the *yogī*.

Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore tells Arjuna that the *yogī* should practice *yoga* discipline. The relevant verse reads:

> *yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṁ rahasi sthitaḥ*
> *ekākī yatacittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ.* VI.10
> The *yogī* should try constantly to keep the mind concentrated, remaining in a solitary place, all alone, controlling his mind and body, free from desire and longing for possessions.

This and the subsequent verses (11-18) mention the various requirements to be fulfilled for the observance of *dhyāna-yoga*, named as *samādhi-yoga* by Madhva and *jñāna-yoga* by Rāmānuja somewhat on the lines of the *yoga* discipline laid down by Patañjali in the *Yogasūtras*. The aspirant should select a quiet place and remain alone (*ekākī*). He should control the mind and body (*yatacittātmā*) and remain free from desires as well as longings for possessions (*aparigraha*). He should sit in a clean place on a firm seat, neither too high nor too low, which is to be covered with sacred grass, a deer skin and a cloth, one over the other. Seated in such a place, keeping his mind one-pointed and controlling the thought and sense, he should practise *yoga* for the purification of the self. It is also necessary to maintain a steady posture by holding the body, head and neck erect and remaining motionless, the gaze fixed at the tip of his nose without looking around. The *Gītā* also says how one should practise *yoga*.

> *praśāntātmā vigatabhīr brahmacarya vrate sthitaḥ*
> *manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ.* VI.14
> With a serene mind, free from fear and with the strict observance of celibacy (*brahmacarya*) and by holding the mind under control, one should fix the thought on God and remain concentrated on Him.

Thought of God (*maccitta*) suggested here is not the same as the meditation on *Paramātman* as required for the practice of *bhakti-yoga*. The purpose of focussing the mind on God is intended to secure purity and concentration of the mind.

By practising *yoga* in this way, the *yogī* attains peace (*śānti*), which is the Supreme *nirvāṇa* that abides in God. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *yuñjann evaṁ sadā'tmānaṁ yogī niyatamānasaḥ*
> *śāntim nirvāṇaparamām matsaṁsthām adhigacchati.* VI.15
> The *yogī* of controlled mind, ever engaging his mind in this way, attains the peace, the Supreme *nirvāṇa* which abides in Me.

This verse speaks of what is finally attained by observing the rigorous *yoga* discipline. It describes in terms of *nirvāṇaparamāṁ śānti*. According to Śaṁkara, it is *śānti* or peace which culminates in *nirvāṇa* or liberation (*śāntiṁ uparatiṁ, nirvāṇaparamāṁ nirvāṇam mokṣaḥ tat paramā niṣṭhā yasyāḥ śānteḥ sā nirvāṇaparamā*). According to Madhva, *śānti* itself is *mokṣa* or liberation which is attained after one has given up the body finally (*nirvāṇa paramā*) which consists in communion with God. *Nirvāṇa* is the state when the body (*vina*) is given up and *paramā* is what comes subsequent to it viz., *mokṣa* (*nirvāṇaparamāṁ śarīratyāgottarakālīnāṁ*).

Rāmānuja explains it in a different way. The *śānti* or peace which is secured by the *yoga* practice by concentrating the mind on *Paramātman*, is the Supreme bliss which abides in *Paramātman* (*nirvāṇa kāṣṭhārūpāṁ matsaṁsthāṁ-mayi saṁsthitāṁ śāntim adhi gacchati*). This explanation seems to be more appropriate than that of Śaṁkara and Madhva. The word *nirvāṇaparamāṁ* is a compound word which should mean *nirvāṇasya paramaṁ*, the final state of *nirvāṇa* or bliss. In other words, it is the Supreme bliss or the highest form of bliss, which naturally abides in *Paramātman* (*mayi saṁsthitā*). *Śānti* or peace is not the mental tranquillity, since this is already acquired by the *yogī* who has controlled his mind and senses. Nor is it appropriate to take *nirvāṇa* as a state devoid of body and *paramāṁ* as what follows after it viz., *mokṣa* in the form of union with God. In the absence of the unceasing meditation on *Paramātman* (*upāsanā* or *bhakti-yoga*), the attainment of disembodiment leading to *mokṣa* in the sense of *Paramātmānubhava* does not arise from the mere *samādhi-yoga*, unless this itself is conceived as *bhakti-yoga*. But it is not so. The teaching about the *bhakti-yoga* comes up in the subsequent *ṣaṭka* (VII-XII) and the present *ṣaṭka* is primarily devoted to *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* for attaining the vision of *jīvātman.*

The subsequent verses (18-23) describing the characteristics of a perfect *yogī* also reveal that the final state reached by the practice of *dhyāna-yoga* is the realization of *jīvātman* and not *Paramātman*:

> *yadā viniyataṁ cittam ātmanyeva avatiṣṭhate*
> *niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā.* VI.18
> When the disciplined (fully controlled) mind is well-settled in the *ātman* alone, free from all yearning for objects of desire, then one is said to be fit for *yoga* (for gettting the vision of the self, acc. to R).

The *ātman* on which the mind is concentrated is obviously the *jīvātman,* unless *ātman* is taken as *Paramātman* as Madhva interprets or non-dual Self as Śaṁkara interprets.

The following two verses also reveal that the object of meditation in *samādhi* is *jīvātman*:

> *yatra uparamate cittam niruddhaṁ yogasevayā*
> *yatra cai'vā'tmanā ātmānaṁ paśynnātmani tuṣyati.* VI.20
> *sukham ātyantikam yat tad buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam*
> *vetti yatra na cai'vā'yaṁ sthitaś calati tattvataḥ.* VI.21
> That in which the mind controlled by means of the practice of *yoga* is at rest (acc. to S) or delights in the self as being blissful (acc. to R), that in which by seeing the self through the mind he is delighted by the self only.
> That in which he finds the supreme happiness which can be grasped by the intellect but is beyond the reach of the senses and wherein established, he no longer wants to depart from it.

Both these verses signify, according to Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja, that the *yogī* finds supreme delight by seeing the self through the mind which is controlled by the practice of *yoga* (*ātmanā ātmānaṁ paśyan*). The first word *ātman* refers to the mind and the second to the self. But Madhva takes *ātmanaḥ yogam* as *yoga* related to the attainment of *Paramātman* (*bhagavadviṣayaṁ yogam*). The meaning of the latter half of the v. 20 is that the *yogī* perceiving the Lord (*ātmānaṁ*) seated in the body (*ātmani*) feels supremely contented. But the verse as it is does not refer to *Paramātman.*

Lord Kṛṣṇa also tells what the *yogī* achieves by the practice of *yoga* in the manner prescribed:

praśāntamanasaṁ hy enaṁ yogīnaṁ sukhamuttamam
upaiti śāntarajasaṁ brahmabhūtam akalmaṣam. VI.27

Supreme bliss comes to this *yogī* whose mind has become tranquil, whose mental impurities are burnt away (by getting rid of the quality of *rajas*), and who has become one with Brahman (acc. to S) or Brahman in the sense of *jīvasvarūpa* (acc. to R).

yuñjann evaṁ sadā'tmānaṁ yogī vigatakalmaṣaḥ
sukhena brahmasaṁsparśam atyantaṁ sukham aśnute. VI.28

Thus engaging the mind in *yoga*, the *yogī* whose impurities are removed, attains (experiences) easily the infinite bliss of contact with Brahman (acc. to S) or the immeasurable joy of close contact with the self (*jīvātman*).

Both the verses state explicitly that the *yogī* attains (*upaiti*) and experiences (*aśnute*) supreme joy or bliss (*sukha*). What is this *sukha* experienced by the *yogī*? Is it the supreme bliss in the form of being one with Brahman by realizing one's identity with Brahman, as Śaṁkara maintains? Or is it the supreme bliss of experiencing the true nature of *jīvātman*, as Rāmānuja interprets? Or is it the joy arising from the vision of *Paramātman*, as Madhva says?

The two words *brahmabhūta* and *brahma-saṁsparśa* used in the verses give room for diverse views. *Brahma-bhūta* means for Rāmānuja the *jīva* in its essential nature and *brahma-saṁsparśa* means experience of *jīvātman*. This explanation stands justified in the context of the meditation on *jīvātman* since the term *brahma* also denotes *jīva*. If the goal of *dhyāna-yoga* is *Paramātman*, Madhva's interpretation would be justified. But the *dhyāna-yoga* outlined in this *adhyāya* does not refer to the meditation on *Paramātman* . As regards Śaṁkara's interpretation, the theory of identity of *jīva* and *Paramātman* needs to be established and this does not find support in the *Gītā*.

There are four verses (VI.29-32) which speak of the identity marks of the ideal *yogī* who is stated to see the oneness of the reality(*samadarśana*). These may be construed in favour of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman. We have to find out if the verses support the theory. Thus says the *Gītā*:

sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani
īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ. VI.29

He whose mind is equipped with *yoga*, sees the self-abiding in all beings and all beings in his self; he sees equality everywhere or he has the vision of sameness everywhere (acc. to R).

This is the general meaning of the verse according to Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja for whom the word *ātman* denotes the individual self. For Madhva, the word *ātman* denotes *Paramātman.* The verse therefore means, acc. to Madhva, that the exalted *yogī* sees the Supreme Lord as present in all creatures and that all beings as existing in and being supported by Him. The word *samadarśana* signifies the vision of the Supreme Lord who exists in all beings to be the same.

The next verse refers to both *ātman* and *Paramātman* and speaks of their equality. It reads:

> *yo māṁ paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati*
> *tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati.* VI.30
> He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me; I am not lost to him nor is he lost to Me.

As the words *māṁ* and *mayi* refer to the Lord, the verse implies some kind of relationship or oneness between *Paramātman* and *jīvātman* in respect of some aspect, as conveyed by the statement "I am not lost to him nor is he lost to me." What does it signify? For Śaṁkara, it implies the identity of the self and *Paramātman* and the self of all beings is the same as *Paramātman.* For Rāmānuja, the selves are many and are different from *Paramātman.* The similarity or oneness refers to the equality (*sādharmya*) in respect of certain characteristic features such as *jñānasvarūpa.* For Madhva this verse implies that the *yogī* who sees *Paramātman* everywhere is not lost to Him in the sense that he is always protected. The next verse says:

> *sarva bhūtasthitaṁ yo māṁ bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ*
> *sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate.* VI.31
> The *yogī* who being established in oneness worships Me as dwelling in all beings, abides in Me, however he may be.

According to Śaṁkara, the *yogī* who has realized the unity of *ātman* (*ekatvam āsthitaḥ*) is considered to be a *nityamukta,* that is, ever liberated and nothing obstructs his path to *mokṣa.* For Rāmānuja, *ekatvam* denotes the similarity between the *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* in respect of the infinite knowledge of which they are constituted (*asaṁkucita jñānaikākāratayā ekatvam āsthitaḥ*). He who has realized this fact views his similarity to *Paramātman* in his own self and also in the self of all at all times even while coming out of *yoga,* howsoever he may live after he comes out of *samādhi.* For Madhva *ekatvam āsthitaḥ* means oneness of vision, that is, the conviction that one Lord is present everywhere. The *yogī* with such a vision is assured of the fruit of *jñāna,* namely *mokṣa* irrespective of his way of life.

The last verse relating to the subject of oneness reads:

ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo'rjuna
sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ. VI.32

According to Śaṁkara it means:
He who sees. O Arjuna, with equality everything, in the image of his own self, whether it be pleasure or pain, he is deemed to be the perfect *yogī. Ātmaupamya* means equality of others with oneself. Whatever is pleasant to oneself, is seen as pleasant to all creatures and that whatever is painful to oneself is painful to all others. This is the attitude of the perfect *yogī* who has realized the oneness of *ātman.*

For Rāmānuja this verse means:
He who sees the pleasure or pain as the same everywhere on account of the similarity of the selves in respect of its intrinsic nature, that *yogī* is deemed as the highest.

Its implication is that a *yogī* who has realized that all the selves are of the same nature as his own viz., they are constituted of *jñāna,* views that just as the pleasure and pain of other individuals have no bearing on his own self, likewise, his own pleasure and pain do not affect him. In this, the *yogī* sees the pleasure and pain of all individuals are same in the sense that they are not connected with the self in its true nature, when it is dissociated with the body.

Madhva explains this verse in a different way. The *dhyāna-yogī* who develops fellowship of feeling for other devotees of the Lord, wishes them the same as he does for himself.

These four verses are important for our study as they have some bearing on the doctrine of the nature of *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* and also their relationship in terms of *abheda* or non-difference or *bheda* or difference. Śaṁkara's interpretation is based on the premise that *jīvas* are essentially the same as Brahman. Brahman when conditioned by limiting adjuncts in the form of different *antaḥkarṇas* caused by *avidyā* appears as many. When *avidyā* is removed, the *jīva* becomes Brahman. On the basis of this doctrine it is possible to conceive the theory of *samatva* of all *ātmans.* Whether or not such a doctrine is explicitly taught in the *Gītā* is a matter to be examined. According to both Rāmānuja and Madhva, it is not supported by the *Gītā.* At the very commencement of the philosophical teaching in the second *adhyāya,* Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks of not only the eternality of the *jīvātman* but also its plurality and difference from *Paramātman.* It is not therefore possible to say in the present *adhyāya* that the perfected *yogī* who has realized the self sees that the same one self who is *Paramātman* in reality abides in all beings.

To overcome this difficulty, Madhva attempts to explain these verses by taking the word *ātman* as *Paramātman* and on that basis, he advances the view that *Paramātman* who abides in all beings is the same. While this may be true, it would not be tenable if the goal of *jñāna-yoga* is taken as *jīvātman.* Besides, *sarvabhūtastham ātma* means *jīvātman* which abides in all beings. Further this verse (VI.29) does not speak of the *sāmya* or equality between *jīvātman* and *Paramātman.* This is referred to in the subsequent verse in which *Paramātman* is mentioned by using the word *māṁ. Sarvatra samadarśana* is meaningful if the verse (VI.29) is taken to imply several *jīvas* abiding in the several beings.

Rāmānuja explains *samadarśana* on the basis of the theory of the *jīvas* as essentially of the same nature namely, constituted of knowledge (*jñānasvarūpa*) after they are disassociated with the physical body. When the *yogī* reaches higher stages of *jñāna-yoga,* he visualizes that his *jīva* is constituted of *jñāna* in respect of its intrinsic nature and on the basis of this realization, he also comprehends that all other *ātmans* abiding in other beings are also of the same nature. In this sense he sees similarity of all *ātmans* and not as identically one with *Paramātman.* In the same manner as the *yogī* further advances in the practice of *yoga,* he realizes that *Paramātman* abides in all beings and that all selves abide in *Paramātman* (*yo māṁ paśyati sarvatra . . . sarvam ca mayi paśyati*). Here again the idea of *samatva* does not imply the identity of *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* since such a theory is not warranted by the *Gītā.* On the contrary, it signifies that there is some similarity between *jīva* and Brahman in respect of certain characteristics such as *jñāna, ānanda* and *amalatva.* As explicitly stated by the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* the *jīva,* when it is liberated from bondage attains *sāmya* with Brahman in the state of *mokṣa* (*paramaṁ sāmyaṁ upaiti*).

Thus, these verses speak of the similarity of the *jīvas* in respect of its intrinsic nature and also similarity of *jīvas* with *Paramātman* in respect of purity after the *jīvas* are freed from *karmas* (bondage). Another kind of similarity of *jīvas* which the *yogī* realizes is in respect of the fact that *sukha* and *duḥkha* do not affect the *jīvasvarūpa,* in the same way the *sukha* and *duḥkha* of others do not touch one's *ātman.* The verses do not therefore support the theory of unity of the self (*brahmātmaikatva*).

After stating the characteristics of the *yogīs* who have perfected the *yoga* practice, Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions the difficulty of controlling the mind and that it can be effected only by means of *abhyāsa,* or repeated practice and *vairāgya* or non-attachment (*abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyena ca gṛhyate*).[3] A person who has not controlled the mind cannot hope to achieve success in *yoga.*

Finally Lord Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna to become a *yogī* by emphasizing the greatness of *yoga.* Thus He says,

> *tapasvibhyo adhiko yogī jñānibhyo'pi mato adhikaḥ*
> *karmibhyaśca adhiko yogī tasmād yogī bhavarjuna.* VI.46
>
> The *yogī* (*dhyāna-yogin* acc. to M) is superior to the men of austerity. He is considered to be superior even to the men of knowledge. He is superior to the men who practise rituals. Therefore do become a *yogī,* O Arjuna.

Jñāna in this verse means, acc. to S, scriptural learning. For Rāmānuja it means knowledge of different subjects bereft of *ātmajñāna* and for Madhva, it refers to the mere knowledge of *dhyāna-yoga.* The significance of the verse, as well explained by Rāmānuja, is that whatever is attained by mere austerity (*kevala tapas*), by mere knowledge bereft of *ātmajñāna* and by mere rituals such as horse sacrifice etc., the result achieved through *yoga* is greater. The superiority of yoga over other kinds of discipline is to be determined with reference to the nature of the goal achieved by the followers of *tapas, jñāna* and *karma.* This explanation which justifies the greatness of the type of *yoga* taught in this *adhyāya,* reveals that the goal of *dhyāna-yoga* is *ātma-sākṣātkāra* or the vision of the *jīvātman,* which is not the case in respect of *tapasvī, karmin* and *jñānīs* referred to in this verse. If *ātma-sākṣātkāra* were the goal of the followers of other disciplines, then there would be no justification to speak of *dhyāna-yogin* as superior to others. It cannot be taken that *ātma-sākṣātkāra* which is the goal of *dhyāna-yoga* is

Paramātma-sākṣātkāra on the assumption that *jīvātman* is identical with *Paramātman*, as Śaṁkara contends, since this theory of identity is not supported by the *Gītā*. Nor it can be said that *ātma-sākṣātkāra* is *Paramātmā-sākṣātkāra*, since the word *ātman* also denotes *Paramātman*, as Madhva claims, for the obvious reason that meditation on *Paramātman* is not taught in this *adhyāya* so explicitly as is done in the *adhyāyas* VII-XII. The meditation on *Paramātman* is only suggested in the concluding verse of this *adhyāya* (VI) in the words *māṁ bhajate.*

Thus it is stated:

yoginām api sarveṣām madgatena antarātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo māṁ sa me yuktatamo mataḥ. VI.47

Acc. to S it means:

Even among all the *yogīs*, the one who with full faith, worships Me with his mind fixed on Me, he is deemed by Me to be the best of *yogīs.*

Acc. to R it means:

He who meditates on Me with loving devotion (*bhajate*) and with faith, whose mind is absorbed in Me, I consider him the greatest of all *yogins* (*yoginām*) and of all others (*sarveṣāṁ api*).

Madhva does not comment on this verse but he appears to hold the view that the one who worships *Paramātman* with faith is the highest of all *yogīs* who worship other deities such as Śrī, Brahmā and Śiva.

This verse, as interpreted by Rāmānuja, has deeper implications. First, the words *yoginām api sarveṣāṁ* signify two categories of *yogīs* as denoted by the conjunction *api.* The first one covers the four kinds of perfected *yogīs* described in the earlier verses (39-42), as denoted by the word *yoginām*, who have realized the equality or similarity of all the *ātmans* (*samadarśins*). The second category of *yogīs* denoted by the word *sarveṣāṁ* refers to the others mentioned in the preceding verse viz., *tapasvī*, *jñānīs* and *karmins.* The words, *yogināṁ* and *sarveṣām*, expressed in *ṣaṣṭhī vibhakti* or genitive sense are to be taken in the sense of *pañcamī vibhakti* or ablative sense, that is, as *yogi bhyaḥ* and *sarvebhyaḥ*, in order to justify that the one who meditates on *Paramātman* is the best as compared to the other types of *yogīs* referred to in the preceding verses.

If we take these two words in the genitive sense, as is interpreted by Śaṁkara and Madhva, that is, as *sarveṣāṁ yogināṁ*, then the *yogī* absorbed in meditation on *Paramātman* mentioned in this verse would have no comparison with the types of *yogīs* referred to in the preceding verses of this *adhyāya*. Śaṁkara and Madhva take the words *yoginām api sarveṣāṁ* in the *ṣaṣṭhī vibhakti* which would mean "among all other *yogīs* such as those who meditate on Rudra, Āditya and other lower deities (Śrī, Brahmā and Śiva acc. to M)." The question of comparing the *Paramātmā upāsaka* with the *upāsaka* of other deities is not relevant in the present context, since there is no reference to such *upāsakas* in this *adhyāya*.

The second important implication of the interpretation of Rāmānuja is that the *yogī* who meditates on *Paramātman* is greater than the *yogīs* who have realized the identity of the self and *Paramātman,* as understood by Śaṁkara, through *dhyāna-yoga,* since the *samadarśins* are included in *sarveṣāṁ yoginām.* According to Madhva, *samadarśins* are the *aparokṣa-jñānīs* or those who have had the vision of *Paramātman* but they do not need to be compared with the *yogī* absorbed in *Paramātman.*

Thus, if we understand the fuller implication of the concluding verse of this *adhyāya,* it would follow that the goal of *dhyāna-yoga* mentioned in the sixth *adhyāya* is the vision of the *jīvātman* (*ātmāvalokana*) and not *Paramātma-sākṣātkāra,* as maintained by Madhva, or even *ātmaikya-sākṣātkāra,* as conceived by Śaṁkara. Another important point to be taken note of is that the verse mentions explicitly the meditation on *Paramātman* (*yo māṁ bhajate*). The word *bhaja* means *sevā* or to worship God with devotion. It has the same meaning as *upāsanā* or *bhakti.* According to Vedic *nighaṇṭu, sevā, bhakti, upāsanā* are synonymous (*sevā bhakti upasti iti naighaṇṭukāḥ*).

The mention of *bhakti* in this verse is a sequel to the theory of *bhakti-yoga* which is going to be taught in the subsequent *adhyāyas* (VII-XII) as the only direct means to *mokṣa.*

It thus follows that the main subject covered so far in the *adhyāyas* II-VI is related to *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga,* also known as *dhyāna-yoga,* whose goal is the vision of *jīvātman.* According to Rāmānuja, *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are the subsidiary means to *bhakti-yoga.* If *jñāna-yoga* is taken in the sense of direct realization of the identity of *jīvātman* and *Paramātman,* which is the direct means to *mokṣa* according to Śaṁkara, there would be no need to present the theory of *bhakti-yoga* as the direct *sādhana* to *mokṣa* in the *adhyāyas* VII-XII. Similarly if *dhyāna-yoga* taught in the sixth *adhyāya* is the same as *bhakti-yoga*, as is maintained by Madhva, the teaching of *bhakti-yoga* as the means to attain *Paramātman* in the subsequent *adhyāyas* would not find any justification.

Thus, it may be observed that the sixth *adhyāya* deals with the *dhyāna-yoga*, which is named as *samādhi-yoga* by Madhva and *jñāna-yoga* by Rāmānuja and the goal of this is the direct realization of the *jīvātman* or *jīvātma-sākṣātkāra*.

REFERENCES

1. *VS*, III.4.1, *puruṣārtho ataḥ śabdāt iti bādarāyaṇaḥ.*
2. See *Tātparya-candrikā* (hereinafter cited as *TC*) on *BG*, VI.4, *karmasu na coditakarmamātra visayam, tasya svārasika saṅgāspadatva abhāvena nisedhāyogāt. Na'pi paroktā prakriyā agnihotrādi nitya naimittika viṣayam, vaidikasya tatra nissaṅgatva ayogāt.*
3. *BG*, VI.35, cf., *Yogasūtra*, I.12, *abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyām tan nirodhaḥ.*

CHAPTER 7

The Theory of *Paramātman*

THE seventh *adhyāya* which is titled *jñāna-vijñāna-yoga* is primarily devoted to expound the nature of *Paramātman.* The previous *adhyāyas* which constitute the first *ṣatka* or hexad present in detail the theories of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga.* The subsequent six *adhyāyas* (VII-XII), which constitute the second hexad (*dvitīya-ṣatka*), deal with the subject of *bhakti-yoga* as the direct means to attain *Paramātman.* This is the view adopted by Rāmānuja. In the preface to the seventh *adhyāya,* he states that the central theme of the *Bhagavadgītā* is *bhakti-yoga,* which is the same as *upāsanā,* also termed as *nididhyāsana,* enjoined in the Upaniṣad as the means to the attainment of the Supreme Goal. The *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga,* the goal of which is the direct vision of *jīvātman* (*ātmāvalokana*), serve as the subordinate means (*aṅga*) to *bhakti-yoga.* In view of this, Rāmānuja maintains that the second group of six *adhyāyas* (*dvitīya-ṣatka*) teaches the nature of *bhakti-yoga* and as allied to it, the nature of *Paramātman,* who is the object of meditation (*upāsya bhūta paramapuruṣa svarūpa yāthātmyam*).

Madhva holds that the second group of six *adhyāyas* is primarily devoted to the description of the Glory of *Paramātman,* the Supreme Lord (*uttaraistu ṣaḍbhiḥ bhagavan māhātmyam prādhānyena āha*). But he does not seem to acknowledge that *bhakti-yoga* as distinct from *jñāna-yoga,* also known as *dhyāna-yoga,* is taught in the second *ṣatka.* The *dhyāna-yoga* enunciated in the sixth *adhyāya* is itself the direct means to *aparokṣa-jñāna* or the direct vision of *Paramātman* leading to final liberation. The *dhyāna-yoga,* to be successful, is to be practised along with *bhakti* or deep devotion to *Paramātman* and the second *ṣatka* covers the theory of *bhakti.* The knowledge of the Glory of the Supreme Lord expounded in this *ṣatka* generates *bhakti* towards Him.

Śaṁkara adopts a different view. According to him, the first *ṣatka* elucidates the true nature of the individual self (*tvam-padārtha*) and the means of its realization. The second *ṣatka* is concerned with the ascertainment of the nature of Brahman (*tat-padārtha*) and its realization through devoted meditation on *Paramātman.* This view is based on the assumption that *jīvātman* (*tvaṁ*) and Brahman (*tat*) are essentially the same and the realization of this identity, which is *jñāna-yoga* for Śaṁkara, is the direct means to *mokṣa.* He does not therefore seem to accord importance to the *bhakti-yoga* as the direct means to *mokṣa,* as maintained by Rāmānuja. We shall examine whether this and the subsequent *adhyāyas* (VII-XII) support the views of Śaṁkara and Madhva.

At the outset Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that He would impart to him, the knowledge (*jñāna*) about Himself in detail along with *vijñāna*:

jñānaṁ te'haṁ savijñānam idaṁ vakṣyāmi aśeṣataḥ
yaj jñātvā ne' ha bhūyo anyat jñātavyam avaśiṣyate. VII.2
I shall tell you in full this *jñāna* together with *vijñāna* by knowing which there shall remain nothing to be known.

The term *jñāna* in this verse, refers to the knowledge about *Paramātman,* who in the context of the concluding verse of the preceding *adhyāya* (VI.47), is the object of meditation (*yo māṁ bhajate*). A comprehensive knowledge of *Paramātman* is required for embarking on meditation on Him. In view of this, Lord Kṛṣṇa calls upon Arjuna to learn it from Him, since He is the omniscient Being. All the commentators are agreed about the meaning of *jñāna* as the knowledge about the Supreme Lord (*madviṣayaṁ jñānam*). As regards *vijñāna,* there is some difference of opinion among them. According to Śaṁkara, *vijñāna* means direct realization of the self (*svānubhava*). That is, the knowledge (*jñāna*) about Brahman should lead to its direct realization. According to Madhva, *vijñāna* stands for knowledge of *Paramātman* in detail. According to Rāmānuja, *jñāna* means knowledge of the essential nature of *Paramātman* (*svarūpa-jñāna*) and *vijñāna* means comprehensive knowledge of *Paramātman* in all its aspects.

At first Lord Kṛṣṇa affirms His pre-eminence as the Supreme Being who is the source of the entire universe comprising the two ontological principles described as *parā prakṛti* and *aparā prakṛti* which belong to Him:

bhūmirāpo' analo vāyur khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca
ahaṁkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā. VII.4
Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, *buddhi,* and *ahaṁkāra* constitute the *prakṛti* of mine divided eightfold.

This verse refers to the non-sentient physical universe which is evolved out of the primordial cosmic matter (*prakṛti*) and its evolutes viz., *mahat, ahaṁkāra,* eleven *indriyas* including *manas,* five *tanmātras* and five gross elements. But the verse mentions only *prakṛti* and the seven evolutes viz., *mahat, buddhi, ahaṁkāra, manas* and the five elements. All these are regarded as *prakṛti* in a general sense since they are modifications of the *prakṛti.* But in a later *adhyāya* (XIII.5), the *Gītā* enumerates all the twenty-four evolutes out of which the physical universe (field of *kṣetra*) is evolved.

Śaṁkara takes *prakṛti* as the *māyā* or *śakti* of *Īśvara. Ahaṁkāra* refers to the *avyakta* or the unmanifest as associated with *avidyā* which is the cause of the manifest universe. *Buddhi* refers to the *mahat-tattva, manas* represents *indriyas, bhūmi, āpa, anala, vāyu* and *khaṁ* refer to the *tanmātras* or the five subtle elements.

This *prakṛti* is described as the *aparā-prakṛti* as contrasted to the *parā-prakṛti.* Thus it is stated:

> *apare'yam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām*
> *jīvabhūtāṁ mahābāho yaye' dam dhāryate jagat.* VII.5
>
> This is my lower *prakṛti.* Know the other *prakṛti* of mine which is higher than this and which has taken the form of sentient souls (acc. to S) or which are the sentient souls (acc. to R) or which is *Śrī-tattva* (acc. to M), by which this universe is supported.

The commentators hold different views regarding the *parā-prakṛti* of the Lord which is described as *jīvabhūta.* According to Śaṁkara, it refers to the *Paramātman* who has taken the form of *jīva,* being conditioned by the *antaḥkaraṇa.* Hence, He is able to sustain the universe by permeating it. For Rāmānuja, the *parā-prakṛti* which is described as *jīvabhūta,* refers to the sentient *jīvātman* through which the universe is sustained. Madhva takes the *parā-prakṛti* as the Goddess Śrī (*Śrī-tattva*) which sustains life of all beings.

The view of Śaṁkara would be justified if *jīva* and Brahman are identical. But according to the *Gītā,* it is not so. Madhva's view may be justified from the theological standpoint but in the *Gītā,* the concept of Śrī, who is the consort of Viṣṇu, is not explicitly mentioned. It would therefore be more appropriate to regard the two concepts of *aparā* and *parā prakṛtis* as the primordial cosmic matter and sentient *jīvātmans* respectively, which belong to *Paramātman* in the sense that they are inherently related to Him, as Rāmānuja explains or dependent on the Supreme Being as Madhva interprets.

The subsequent verses which speak of *Paramātman* as the primary cause of the universe which comprises both the sentient souls and non-sentient matter also lend support to the explanations offered by Rāmānuja.

The following verse affirms that the two *prakṛtis* serve as the cause of all beings in the universe:

> *etad yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇī' ty upadhāraya*
> *ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhāvaḥ pralayas tathā.* VII.6
> Know that all beings have their origin in these (two *prakṛits*). I am the cause of the entire universe and also its dissolution.

The term *bhūtāni* means the living beings which constitute the aggregate of sentient souls and non-sentient matter and hence they are regarded to have been caused by the *parā* and *aparā prakṛtis.* However, *Paramātman* is stated to be the cause of the universe and also its dissolution, since the two *prakṛtis* have their origin in *Paramātman.* In other words, *Paramātman* is the source of the universe through His two *prakṛtis.*

Lord Kṛṣṇa further tells that there is nothing higher than Himself:

> *mattaḥ parataraṁ nā'nyat kiṁcid asti dhanañjaya*
> *mayi sarvamidaṁ protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva.* VII.7
> There is nothing whatever, that is higher than Me, O Arjuna. All this is strung on Me as rows of gems on a string.

This is an important verse in the *Gītā* which establishes the supremacy of *Paramātman* and His relation to the universe. As explained by Rāmānuja, *Paramātman* is the Supreme Being since He is the sole cause of both the *aparā* and *parā prakṛtis* and also their inner controller, as declared in the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa. He is also the Supreme since He is endowed with attributes such as *jñāna, śakti, bala,* etc., which no other deity possesses. In other words, no one is higher than Him. According to Madhva the word *parataram* signifies that *Paramātman* is the highest.

Another important characteristic of *Paramātman* which is well brought out in this verse, is that all the sentient beings and non-sentient entities in the universe are sustained by *Paramātman.* The illustration of the thread and the gems conveys the idea that the universe depends for its existence on *Paramātman* (*āśraya*). It does not suggest that all these entities in the universe are superimposed on *Paramātman*. According to Rāmānuja, *Paramātman* is the Self (*śarīri*) for the universe which is its body (*śarīra*), as stated by the *Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa*. The two are intimately related to *Paramātman* like the body to the soul.

The subsequent four verses (VII.8-12) equate *Paramātman* with all the things in the universe. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *raso'ham apsu kaunteya prabhā'smi śāśisūryayoḥ*
> *praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣam nṛṣu.* VII.8
> I am the taste in the waters, O Arjuna, I am the light in the moon and the sun. I am the syllable *Om* in all the Vedas; I am the sound in ether and manhood in men.
> *puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca tejaś cā'smi vibhāvasau*
> *jīvanaṁ sarvabhūteṣu tapaś cā'smi tapasviṣu.* VII.9
> I am the pure fragrance in earth and the brightness in fire. I am the life principle in all beings and the austerity in ascetics.
> *bījam māṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ viddhi pārtha sanātanam*
> *buddhir buddhimatām asmi tejas tejasvinām ahaṁ* VII.10
> Know Me Arjuna, to be the primeval seed of all beings. I am the intelligence of the intelligent. I am brilliance of the brilliant.
> *balam balavatāṁ cā'haṁ kāmarāgavivarjitam*
> *dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kamo'smi bharatarṣabha* VII.11
> I am the strength of the strong, devoid of desire and passion. In all beings, I am the desire (*kāma*) which is not contrary to *dharma*, O Arjuna.

What is the philosophical significance of these verses?

According to Śaṁkara, the taste which is the essence of water, light which is the essence of the sun etc., are the very *Paramātman* and hence these entities possessing these essential qualities are strung together in Him. That is, the water etc., are all established in Him, who is their essences.

According to Madhva, the significance of these verses is that the *rasa* in water, light in the sun, the sound in ether etc., are all dependent on the Supreme Lord. In other words, it is the Lord Himself who regulates and sustains such distinctive properties.

Rāmānuja offers a more satisfactory explanation. All these entities with their distinctive characteristics originate from *Paramātman* and they also depend on Him. Hence they constitute His body (*śarīra*) in the sense that they wholly depend on Him for their very existence and are also controlled by Him. This explanation is substantiated by the following statement of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

> *ye cai'va sāttvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasāś ca ye*
> *matta eve'ti tān viddhi na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi.* VII.12
> Know that all those states of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* are from Me alone. But I am not in them. They are in Me.

Commenting on this verse, Rāmānuja states that whatever entities exist in the world constituted of three qualities viz., *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* in the form of physical bodies, sense organs, objects of enjoyment and their causes, have all originated from *Paramātman* only and they abide in Him alone. They constitute His body (*śarīra*) in the sense of being dependent on Him and controlled by Him. However, *Paramātman* does not depend for His existence on these entities at any time (*nāhaṁ kadācidapi tadāyattasthitiḥ*).

Śaṁkara also maintains the view that though all beings originate from *Paramātman,* the latter (*Paramātman*) is not in them in the sense that He is not under their control, as are the transmigrating beings. For Madhva, the statement "I am not in them" signifies that though the Lord is present everywhere, He is not supported by them (*natu ahaṁ teṣu iti tad-anādhāratvam ucyate*). In other words, the whole world has Him as their support but He does not need them for His support (*tadāśritaṁ jagatsarvam nāsau kutracidāśritaḥ*).

Lord Kṛṣṇa, after expounding the nature of *Paramātman,* explains why the people in the universe are not aware of it. Thus He says:

> *tribhir guṇamāyair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvam idam jagat;*
> *mohitam nā'bhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam.* VII.13
> This entire universe being deluded by the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti* does not recognize Me, who is above them and imperishable.

The *prakṛti* constituted of the three *guṇas* is described as Divine *māyā* of the Lord:

> *daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā.* VII.14
> This divine *māyā* of Mine, consisting of the three *guṇas,* is hard to overcome.

The term *māyā* is employed for the first time in the *Gītā.* What does it denote? It is stated to be Divine (*daivī*) because it belongs to Viṣṇu or *Īśvara* (*devasya mama Īśvarasya Viṣṇoḥ svabhāvabhūta,* acc. to S) or created by *Paramātman* (*mayā eva nirmitā,* acc. to R) or it is the presiding female deity named as Durgā, who belongs to Viṣṇu (acc. to M).

According to Advaita Vedānta, *māyā* is the cosmic principle of illusion which conceals the true nature of Brahman and projects the appearance of the universe. It is equated with the primordial cosmic matter (*prakṛti*) constituted of the three *guṇas.*

Rāmānuja and Madhva do not admit that *māyā* is illusory in character. It is a real entity since it is the *śakti* or power of *Īśvara* which is capable of producing marvellous effects. The word *māyā* in the verse is used for the effects of the three *guṇas* because it has got the power of generating wonderful effects as in the case of the magical power of the *asuras* and *rākṣasas* (*asyāḥ māyāśabdavācyatvam āsurarākṣasāstrādīnām iva vicitra kāryakaratva*). Hence the word *māyā* does not signify the sense of illusoriness (*ato māyā śabdo na mithyā rthavācī*). The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* which states *māyā* is *prakṛti* (*māyāṁ tu prakṛtiṁ viddhi*) and the Lord as *mayin* or the possessor of *māyā* convey the idea that *māyā* of the Lord is real (*pāramārthikī bhagavan-māyā*). Because it has the power to veil the true nature of *Īśvara,* it deludes the persons in the universe.

For Madhva also, *māyā* as the presiding deity of the *prakṛti* consisting of the three *guṇas* belongs to the Lord and hence it is real.

Kṛṣṇa says that the only way of overcoming this *māyā* is to seek refuge in the Supreme Lord.

māmeva ye prapadyante māyāṁ etāṁ taranti te. VII.14
Those who take refuge in Me alone cross beyond this *māyā.*

The word *prapadyante* is interpreted by Śaṁkara as taking refuge in the Lord by renouncing all forms of rites and duties with the conviction that He alone as *māyāvin* is the Self of the individual (*māmeva māyāvinam svātmabhūtam sarvātmanā ye prapadyante*).

For Rāmānuja, it means that one should meditate only on *Paramātman,* by renouncing *māyā* (*māyām utsṛjya māṁ eva upāsata ityarthaḥ*).

Acc. to Madhva, one who gives up everything else and surrenders to the Lord, would be able to overcome *māyā.*

But all do not take recourse to the Lord. The *Gītā* points out that the evil doers who are foolish (*duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ*), the lowest of men, those persons deprived of knowledge by *māyā* and those who are dominated by demoniac nature, do not seek refuge in *Paramātman.*

Only the men of good deeds (*sukṛtinaḥ*) worship God. These are classified into four kinds:

> *caturvidhā bhajante māṁ janāḥ sukṛtino Arjuna*
> *ārto jijnāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha.* VII.16
> Four types of men of good deeds, worship Me, O Arjuna.These are the men in distress, the seekers of knowledge, the seekers for wealth and the men of wisdom (who have knowledge of God).

The word *ārta* means for Śaṁkara, one who is afflicted or one who is in distress, whereas for Rāmānuja, it means one who has lost his position and wealth and who wishes to regain the same. *Arthārthī* is the one who is desirous of acquiring wealth, which he does not already possess. *Jijñāsu* is one who desires to know the true nature of *Paramātman.* But Rāmānuja interprets it as the one who is desirous of realizing the *jīvātman* in its true nature as dissociated with the body (*prakṛti viyukta ātma-svarūpa avāptim icchuḥ*). The term *jñānī* means for Śaṁkara the knower of the true nature of Viṣṇu (*viṣṇoḥ tattva-vit*). Rāmānuja explains it more specifically as the one who knows that *Paramātman* is the most desired object of attainment (*bhagavantam paramaprāpyam manvānaḥ*), after realizing that the vision of the *jīvātman* is not an end in itself.

Of these the *jñānī* who is ever in constant communion with the Divine, is the best.

> *teṣāṁ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktir viśiṣyate*
> *priyo hi jñānino atyarthaṁ ahaṁ sa ca mama priyaḥ.* VII.17
> Of these the *jñānī* who is ever in communion with Me and devoted exclusively to the one Supreme Being, is the best, for I am very dear to him and he too is dear to Me.

The other three categories of persons meditate on God with devotion until they achieve their desired goals, whereas the *jñānī* has single-minded devotion to God as the only goal to be attained and hence he is considered to be far superior to others. This point is made more explicit in the subsequent verse:

> *udārāḥ sarva evai'te jñānī tu ātmai'va me matam*
> *āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām eva'nuttamāṁ gatim.* VII.18
> All these are indeed noble (generous acc. to R), but the *jñānī* is the very self (acc. to S) or My own self (acc. to R). This is My opinion for he (*jñānī*) is engrossed in Me only as the highest goal.

All are noble because all worship God for different purposes.

The word *ātmaiva* is interpreted by Śaṁkara to mean that he is not different from the Lord (*na anyaḥ mattaḥ iti*), which implies the identity of the two (*tādātmya*). This view would be justified if *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* are admitted as non-distinct. But it is not so, since throughout the *Gītā*, the two are regarded as different. Rāmānuja therefore interprets the expression *ātmaiva* to mean "My own self" in the sense that the Lord considers Himself as dependent on *jñānī* for His sustenance. The term *ātmā* implies that which is the supporter of the body (*śarīraṁ prati dhārakāni ātmā*). The *jīvātman* is considered as the *ātmā* of *Paramātmā* in a figurative sense of glorifying the true *bhakta* who considers himself as unable to live without the Lord.

The importance of *jñānī* is emphasized in a different way.

> *bahūnāṁ janmanām ante jñānavān māṁ prapadyate*
> *Vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ.* VII.19
>
> At the end of many births the *jñānī* finds refuge in Me (attains Me, acc. to S), by realizing that Vāsudeva is all. It is very hard to find such a person.

The significance of this verse is that *jñānī* who is very rare, is the one who realizes that "Vāsudeva is all." What is the implication of the expression "*Vāsudevaḥ sarvam?*" Śaṁkara following the theory of identity of individual self and *Paramātman* intreprets that Vāsudeva is the very *ātmā* of an individual (*pratyagātma*). This interpretation would not be sustainable since in the earlier verses Lord Kṛṣṇa draws a clear distinction between *Paramātman* and *jīvātman* by stating that *jñānī* or the one who has the knowledge of the true nature of *Paramātman* is very dear to Him (*atyartha priyaḥ*). Rāmānuja therefore explains the statement to mean that Vāsudeva alone is the Supreme Goal and also the means of attainment and whatever other desires one may have all that is He alone. According to Madhva, Vāsudeva is the cause of all. This is a way of demonstrating the humility of the devotee towards God who is everything.

The rarity of such a *jñānī* is further emphasized by pointing out that ordinary human beings whose minds are inclined towards worldly desires worship other deities by observing various appropriate rites for this purpose (*kamais tais-tair hṛtajñānāḥ prapadyante anyadevatāḥ*).

But the fruit gained by these men are not everlasting (*antatvat tu phalaṁ*). They only attain the deities worshipped by them. But one who worships the Supreme Lord alone attains Him (*madbhaktā yānti māṁ*).

Lord Kṛṣṇa points out that all beings are subject to ignorance at birth due to the delusion of pairs of opposites (such as pleasure and pain), born out of desire and hatred (*sarvabhūtāni sammoham sarge yānti*). But those men of meritorious deeds in whom the sin has come to an end and consequently having become free from the delusion of dualities, meditate on Him with firm determination.

The purpose and the nature of attainment by the different types of devotees are briefly explained in the following concluding verses:

> *jarāmaraṇamokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye*
> *te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cā'khilam.* VII.29
> Those who take refuge in Me and strive for deliverance from old age and death, they know *brahma*; the *adhyātmā* and all about *karma.*

The term *brahma* is taken as Brahman by S and M and *adhyātma* as the *jīvātman.* Rāmānuja interprets "*brahma*" as *jīvātman* in its true nature as dissociated with the physical body (*prakṛtiviyukta ātmasvarūpa*). The term *adhyātma* read along with *kṛtsnaṁ* means all about *jīvātman.* He adopts this meaning since these terms are explained accordingly in the subsequent *adhyāya* (VIII).

> *sādhibhūtādhidaivaṁ māṁ sādhiyajñaṁ ca ye viduḥ*
> *prayāṇakāle'pi ca māṁ te vidur yuktacetasaḥ.* VII.30
> And those who know Me with the *adhibhūta, adhidaiva* and *adhiyajña* or as the one that governs the material and divine aspects and all sacrifices, they too, with their minds fixed in meditation, know Me even at the time of their death.

The terms *adhibhūta, adhidaiva* and *adhiyajña* are fully explained in the *adhyāya* VIII. The important point to be noted is, as interpreted by Rāmānuja, that the above verse is applicable to the devotees who worship *Paramātman* for the purpose of *aiśvarya* or wealth, whereas the earlier verse refers to the seekers of the knowledge of the self (*jijñāsu*). We shall discuss these issues in the subsequent chapter.

From the foregoing analysis, it may be observed that this *adhyāya* presents the nature of *Paramātman* and the importance of devoted worship to attain Him.

CHAPTER 8

The Theory of Meditation on *Akṣara-brahma*

THE eighth *adhyāya* is generally named as *Akṣara-brahma-yoga* or the theory of meditation on *akṣara-brahma.* But its contents reveal that by way of explaining a few concepts referred to in the preceding *adhyāya* it deals with the mode of meditation of the three categories of devotees viz., *arthārthī, jijñāsu* and *jñānī* and the manner of remembrance of *Paramātman* by them at the time of death. This is the view of Rāmānuja.

According to Śaṁkara, the main theme of the *adhyāya* is the meditation on *akṣara-brahma* which is regarded as the immutable Supreme Brahman. For Madhva this *adhyāya* deals with what the *jñānī* should do at the time of death and also the path of *arcirādi* (*maraṇakāla kartavya gatyādi*).

At the outset, Arjuna raises the question seeking elucidation of the terms referred to in the preceding *adhyāya*:

> *kiṁ tad brahma kiṁ adhyātmaṁ kiṁ karma puruṣottama*
> *adhibhūtam ca kiṁ proktam adhidaivaṁ kim ucyate.* VIII.1
> *adhiyajñaḥ kathaṁ ko'tra dehe'smin madhusūdana*
> *prayāṇakāle ca kathaṁ jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ.* VIII.2
> What is that *brahma*? What is *adhyātma*? What is *karma*? What is said to be *adhidaiva*? Who is *adhiyajña* in this body? How are Thou to be known at the time of death by the self-controlled?
>
> These terms are explained by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the following verses.
>
> *akṣaram brahma paramaṁ svabhāvo adhyātma ucyate*
> *bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visragaḥ karmasaṁjñitaḥ.* VIII.3
> This verse is interpreted differently by the commentators. Acc. to S it means: 'The imperishable is the Supreme Brahman. The selfhood is said to be the individual self (*adhyātma*). *Karma* is the name given to the sacrificial offerings which bring into existence all beings.'
>
> The term *akṣara* is regarded by Śaṁkara as the *Para* Brahman

on the authority of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.* The *adhyātma* or the individual self is the same Brahman existing as the *pratyagātmā* or the indwelling self in every individual.

Madhva also takes "*akṣaram paramaṁ*" as the Supreme Being. The *adhyātma* is the *jīva-svarūpa* itself. The word *svabhāva* means *jīvātman* in its immutable nature (*bhāva*). *Karma* is interpreted as the stupendous creative activity of God which brings the sentient (*bhūta*) and insentient world (*bhāva*) into being (*bhūtānāṁ jīvānāṁ bhāvānāṁ jaḍa-padārthānāṁ ca udbhavakarī Īśvarakriyā, visargaḥ viśeṣeṇa sargānām visargaḥ*).[1]

Though the explanation of Śaṁkara and Madhva is in accordance with their metaphysical stand, it does not conform to the context of the teachings contained in the earlier *adhyāya* and also the later verses relating to the meditation of the persons named as *jijñāsu* or those seeking the direct vision of *jīvātman* in its true nature as dissociated from the body. In view of this, Rāmānuja interprets these terms differently. The term *brahma* refers to the *jīvātman* in the present context and not the Supreme Being. The question raised by Arjuna is "*kiṁ tad brahma*" or "What is that *brahma*?" In reply it is stated "*akṣaram brahma paramaṁ.*" It therefore means that *brahma* is *akṣara*, the imperishable (*na kṣarati iti akṣara*). This *akṣara*, as mentioned in the *Subāla Upaniṣad* in connection with the process of dissolution of the universe, stands for the totality of all the individual selves which dissolve in the *tamas* or *prakṛti.*[2] The word *paramaṁ* or Supreme is an adjective qualifying *akṣara* which implies that the supreme *akṣara* is the *jīvātman* in its true form as totally dissociated with the physical body (*prakṛti viyukta jīvātma svarūpa*) as distinct from the *baddha jīva.* In the context of the mode of meditation of a *jijñāsu*, who desires to have the vision of *jīvātman*, this interpretation of Rāmānuja is more appropriate than that of Śaṁkara and Madhva.

The word *adhyātma*, according to Rāmānuja, means that which dwells with the *jīvātman* (*ātmani saṁbandhyamānaṁ ity adhyātma śabda nirvacanam*). The word *svabhāva* stands for the material stuff (*prakṛti*). It refers to the five subtle elements and *indriyas* along with the latent impressions, etc., which are described as *bhūta-sūkṣma* with which the *jīvātman* is associated after it exits from the body, as stated in the passage of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* dealing with the *pañcāgnividyā.* The knowledge of this *bhūta-sūkṣma* as attached to the self is essential for developing *vairāgya* by an individual aspiring for *mokṣa.* The term *karma* is interpreted by Rāmānuja as the creative energy or the generative force (*retas*) which is the cause of the birth of human beings. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* dealing with the *pañcāgnividyā* refers to this point. The need to know about this arises because it is to be avoided by one who seeks *mokṣa* (*parihaṇīyatayā mumukṣubhiḥ jñātavyam*). In a later verse, the *Gītā* itself says that one who desires to attain *akṣara* should practise *brahmacarya* or celibacy (*yadicchanto brahmacaryam caranti*).[3] Contextually the meaning offered by Rāmānuja for these technical terms—*akṣara, adhyātma* and *karma,* is justified. It conforms to the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtras.*

Regarding the other terms such as *adhibhūta,* Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cā' dhidaivatam
adhiyajño' hamevātra dehe dehabhṛtāṁ vara. VIII.4

Adhibhūta is the perishable thing. *Adhidaiva* is the self. *Adhiyajña* is Myself (the Lord) in the body.

These terms are also explained differently by the commentators. Acc. to S, *adhibhūta* is the immutable cosmic matter which is the basis of all created things. For Rāmānuja, it means the perishable material entities. Madhva also takes it as perishable objects.

Adhidaivataṁ which denotes a person (*puruṣa*) is, according to S the cosmic soul known as *Hiraṇyagarbha* who resides in the Sun and sustains all creatures. According to Rāmānuja, it refers to the individual self who desires to enjoy the heavenly pleasure in a greater measure than that of the celestial deities. Madhva means by it Saṁkarṣaṇa, the presiding deity of the *jīvas.* The *adhiyajña* is the Lord Himself who abides in the body of the individual and who is the one propitiated in the *yajña* (acc. to R) or the one who is the enjoyer of the effects of all *yajñas* (acc. to M).

According to Rāmānuja, the knowledge of the *adhibhūta* and *adhidaiva* is considered necessary for persons who meditate on *Paramātman* for the purpose of wealth and also heavenly prosperity. The knowledge of God as *adhiyajña* is needed by all the three categories of persons viz., *arthārthī, jijñāsu* and *jñānī.*

Similarly the remembrance of God at the time of death or the exit of the soul from the body is also needed by all the categories of devotees. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

antakāle ca māmeva smaran muktvā kalevaram
yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṁ yāti na'styatra saṁśayaḥ. VIII.5

And whoever at the time of death gives up his body and departs thinking of Me alone, he attains My state (acc. to S), or My form (acc. to R and M). There is no doubt about this.

The *madbhāva* is interpreted by Śaṁkara as becoming the same as the object of contemplation viz., Viṣṇu. But if the *upāsaka* and *upasya* are different, the two cannot become identical. Rāmānuja and Madhva therefore take it in the sense that the devotee attains a form similar to that form which is being contemplated by Him (*tattat anusandheya ākāra-viśeṣa-sāmya prāptiḥ vivakṣitaḥ*). As Madhva explains, *madbhāva* means the nature akin to that of *Paramātman* (*madbhāva mayi sattām*).

This point is made explicit in the subsequent verse:

yaṁ yaṁ vā'pi smaran bhāvam tyajaty ante kalevaraṁ
taṁ taṁ evai'ti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ. VIII.6
Whatever form one remembers at the end (at the time of leaving the body), he attains that form only, being influenced by the thought of that form on which he meditates until the last (moment).

The significance of this verse is that the *antima smṛti* or the final thought which arises from the nature of the object of contemplation determines the nature of the attainment after death. That is, if an individual embarking on meditation is thinking of *Paramātman* at the time of death, he attains Him. If he is thinking of some other deity or other desired object, he attains that only. Hence Lord Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna to remember Him all the time.

tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca
mayyarpita-mano-buddhir mām evai' ṣyasy asaṃśayaḥ. VIII.7
Therefore at all times, meditate on Me and fight. With your mind and understanding set on Me, you shall come to Me without doubt.

After elucidating the points raised by Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa describes how the meditation is to be practised and the nature of *antima smṛti* to be had by the three categories of devotees referred to in the previous chapter viz., the aspirant for great wealth and power (*aiśvaryārthī*), the aspirant for the realization of the self (*kaivalyārthī*) and those who seek *Paramātman* (*jñānī*). This is the view advanced by Rāmānuja in interpreting the vv. 8-14. But Śaṁkara and Madhva are of the view that all these verses cover the meditation on *Paramātman* (*Saguṇa* Brahman for S) by the *jñānī.* The closer examination of the verses reveals that the interpretation of Rāmānuja is more appropriate.

First, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells how one should meditate on the Lord and remember Him in the final stage.

abhyāsayogayuktena cetasā nā'nyagāminā
paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ yāti pārthā' nucintayan. VIII.8

It means, acc. to S 'By meditating with a mind which is attuned by the *yoga* of constant practice and which does not wander after anything else, one reaches the Divine and Supreme Person abiding in the solar orb.'

Acc. to R, it means 'By meditating with a mind trained by constant practice (*abhyāsa*) and *yoga* (*upāsanā*), not moving towards anything else and thinking of the Supreme Divine Person, one reaches Me, O Arjuna.'

According to Śaṁkara's interpretation, the person who meditates constantly on the Supreme Person attains the Divine Person abiding in the orb of the sun. According to Madhva, the person who practises meditation continuously attains the Supreme Being. Rāmānuja on the other hand, explains that besides the constant practice of meditation on the Supreme Divine Being, the remembrance of Him at the final stage is important for attaining the status similar to the Supreme Lord in respect of *aiśvarya* or heavenly prosperity which is the desired goal of this category of aspirant (*arthārthī*).

The two subsequent verses provide the description of the Supreme *Puruṣa* who is the goal of attainment.

kaviṁ purāṇam anuśāsitāram aṇor aṇīyāṁsam anusmared yaḥ
sarvasya dhātāram acintyarūpam ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ
parastāt. VIII.9
prayāṇakāle manasā' cālena bhaktyā yukto yogabalena cai'va
bhruvor madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak sa taṁ paraṁ puruṣam upaiti
divyam. VIII.10

He who meditates on Him as the omniscient (*kavi*), the Primeval, the Ruler, the subtler than the subtle, the creator of all, whose nature is inconceivable (beyond thought, acc. to S), who is of the complexion of the effulgent sun and who is beyond the *tamas* (cosmic matter), and he who remembers Him with devotion at the time of his death by firmly fixing his vital breath between the eyebrows with a steady mind and power of *yoga*, he attains the same Supreme Divine Person or attains the same status of the Supreme Person (in respect of power and glory, acc. to R).

The above verses, according to the interpretation of Rāmānuja, refer to both the meditation on the Supreme Being (denoted by the word *anucintana*) and also the remembrance of Him at the time of death (*prayāṇakāle manasā bhaktyā-yuktaḥ*).The word *upaiti* conveys that the devotee, as an aspirant for *aiśvarya* attains a status of the Supreme Being similar to Him in respect of *aiśvarya*. This explanation makes the meditation on *Paramātman* for the purpose of the Lord's *aiśvarya* meaningful. For Śaṁkara and Madhva, the mode of meditation suggested in these verses leads only to the attainment of *Paramātman*, which is the same goal as that of *jñānī* and there would be no distinction between *aiśvaryārthī* and *jñānī*.

Lord Kṛṣṇa next describes the meditation on *akṣara* which is taken as Brahman by both S and M and as *jīvātman* by R.

Thus says the Lord:

yadakṣaraṁ vedavido vadanti viśanti yad yatayo vītarāgaḥ
yad icchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti tat te padaṁ saṅgraheṇa
pravakṣye. VIII.11

I shall briefly tell you that goal (acc. to R) which the knowers of the Veda call the imperishable, which ascetics freed from passion enter, and desiring which they lead a life of continence.

The word *pada* is used in the Upaniṣads in the sense of the *svarūpa* of Brahman.[4] It also refers to the abode of Viṣṇu.[5] It also refers to the goal. Śaṁkara and Madhva take it in the sense of Brahman itself, whereas Rāmānuja interprets it as the goal of attainment.

The manner of meditating on *akṣara* is as follows:

sarvadvārāṇi saṁyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca
mūrdhny ādhāyā' tmanaḥ prāṇam āsthito yogadhāraṇam. VIII.12
Om ity ekākṣaraṁ brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran
yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ sa yāti paramāṁ gatim. VIII.13

He who, by controlling all the gates of the body (sense organs) and holding the mind within the heart, focussing the mind on *Paramātman*, taking one's vital breath to the crown of the head and maintains himself in steady concentration (uninterrupted concentration on God acc. to M).

He who utters the single syllable *Om* which denotes Brahman, thinking of Me constantly as he departs, giving up his body, he reaches (attains) the Supreme Goal (the highest state).

The *paramāṁ gati* mentioned in the verse refers to the Supreme Goal which is Brahman, according to Madhva and Śaṁkara. For Rāmānuja it means the pure state of the *jīvātman* as dissociated with the body, which is designated as *kaivalya*, by attaining which the *jīva* does not come back to mundane existence (*sa yāti paramāṁ gatim prakṛti viyuktaṁ matsamānākāraṁ apunaravṛttiṁ ātmānaṁ prāpnoti ityarthaḥ*). This interpretation is substantiated by the later vv. VIII.20-21 which speak of the non-return to bondage by those who have reached the state of *kaivalya.*

Now follows the description of the meditation to be performed by the *jñānī* and also the manner of His attainment:

Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

ananyacetāḥ satataṁ yo māṁ smarati nityaśaḥ
tasyā' haṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha nityayuktasya yoginaḥ. VIII.14
He who ceaselessly meditates on Me and remembers Me at all times (*satatam*), without thinking of any other thing (*kaivalya* or *aiśvarya* acc. to R), to such a *yogī* craving for eternal union with Me (*nityayuktasya*), I am easily accessible.

This verse acc. to Rāmānuja, speaks of the mode of meditation of *jñānī.* The phrases *ananyacetaḥ, satata nityaśaḥ, smaraṇa* and *nityayukta* distinguish the *jñānī* from *aiśvaryārthī* and *kaivalyārthī.* Though the latter also meditate on *Paramātman* with devotion, their goal is to attain either the *aiśvarya,* or *kaivalya,* unlike the *jñānī* who exclusively aspires for the attainment of *Paramātman.*

Further, Lord Kṛṣṇa points out that *jñānīs* do not return to the mundane existence once they attain *Paramātman.* Thus He says:

māṁ upetya punarjanma duḥkālayam aśāśvatam
na' pnuvanti mahatmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramāṁ gatāḥ. VIII.15
Having reached Me, these exalted souls are never again subject to rebirth, which is the abode of sorrow and which is impermanent, for they have reached the highest goal (perfection, acc. to S).

ābrahmabhuvanāl lokāh punarāvartino' rjuna
māṁ upetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate. VIII.16

All the worlds from the realm of *brahma* downwards, are subject to return to rebirth, but on reaching Me, there is no return to rebirth.

Madhva interprets this verse in a different way on the authority of a *smṛti* text (*Nārāyaṇagopāla-kalpa*), "*abrahmabhuvanāt*" is taken to mean that from the abode of *caturmukha-brahma* on mount Mahemeru and the worlds beyond them such as *śvetadvīpa* and *anantāsana*, there is no return to rebirth. But for those going to realms other than these there is return to rebirth. This explanation does not appear to be appropriate in the context of the earlier and later verses which provide the reason for the non-return of the *jñānīs* who attain *Paramātman*, as contrasted to those who reach other realms including the realm of *caturmukha-brahma*, which are subject to cosmic evolution (*sṛṣṭi*) and dissolution (*pralaya*) at the end of 1000 *yugas*. But the realm of *Paramātman* which is attained by *jñānī* is eternal and hence one who reaches it does not again return to rebirth.

The *Gītā* also mentions one other state of higher existence by attaining which one does not have rebirth. According to Rāmānuja, this is the state of *kaivalya* which is sought for by the categories of individuals designated as *jijñāsu* or *kaivalyārthī*. But Śaṁkara and Madhva do not admit this concept of *kaivalya*. The higher state mentioned in the vv. 20-21 acc. to S and M refers to the Supreme Brahman who does not perish even when all other existences perish, whereas it refers to the state of *kaivalya*, acc. to R. The relevant verses read:

paras tasmāt tu bhāvo'nyo avyakto avyaktāt sanātanaḥ
yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati. VIII. 20
avyakto akṣara ity uktas tam āhuḥ paramāṁ gatim
yaṁ prāpya na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama. VIII.21

But as distinct (superior, acc. to R) from this unmanifest entity (primordial cosmic matter), there is yet another unmanifest Being which is eternal and which does not perish even when all entities (*bhūtas*) perish.

It is called *avyakta* (unmanifest) and *akṣara* (imperishable). This they say, is the Supreme Goal or state (*paramāṁ gatim*) This is My Supreme Abode, by attaining which one does not return to *saṁsāra*.

The verses refer to a higher state or Being described as *avyakta* and also designated as *akṣara* which is different from the *avyakta* referred to in the earlier verses. The former *avyakta* is the state of the primordial cosmic matter (*prakṛti*) which, prior to creation is unmanifest (*avyākṛta*). Śaṁkara regards it as *avidyā* which is the root cause of manifest universe. The latter *avyakta* is different from it and it is known as *akṣara*, which is the same as Brahman and which is imperishable both acc. to S and M. For Rāmānuja the latter *avyakta* which is higher (*paraḥ*) than the cosmic matter is not Brahman, but it is the *jīvātman* in its true form as *jñānasvarūpa*. It is described as *avyakta* in the sense that it cannot be apprehended by any *pramāṇas*. It can be known only by itself (*sva saṁvedya*). It is called *akṣara* because it is imperishable. It is *nitya* and not subject to any origin or destruction. It is regarded as the highest goal because the aspirants seeking the vision of *jīvātman* does not return to mundane existence when once it is achieved. Its description as abode (*dhāma*) of the Lord is in the sense that it is a state under the control of *Paramātman* and when once it is attained, there is no return to bondage.

Though the term *akṣara* can denote the imperishable Brahman, as Śaṁkara and Madhva have interpreted, it is more appropriate to take it as *jīvātman* in the context of explaining the nature of the goal to be attained by the three different categories of persons viz., *arthārthī, jijñāsu* and *jñānī* who meditate on *Paramātman* with devotion. In a later *adhyāya* XII, there is specific reference to the meditation on *akṣara* as different from *Paramātman*. Keeping all these facts in mind, Rāmānuja explains the present verses (VIII.20-21) as applicable to the meditation of *kaivalyārthī* or the one aspiring for the realization of the self (*jīvātman*) in its true form. The merit of this theory would be discussed in the concluding chapter on General Evaluation.

After teaching the modes of meditation by the three categories of *bhaktas*, Lord Kṛṣṇa emphatically states that unswerving meditation is the only means to attain *Paramātman*.

puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tu ananyayā
yasyā'ntasthāni bhūtāni yena sarvam idaṁ tatam. VIII.22

But the Supreme Person in whom all beings abide and by whom all this is pervaded, is to be attained by unswerving devotion, O Arjuna.

The concluding part of this *adhyāya* describes the two paths known as *arcirādi-mārga* and *dhūmra-mārga*, through which the soul after its exit from the body traverses to the higher realms. The *arcirādi-mārga* comprises the deities ruling *agni* (fire), light, day, the bright half of the month, the six months of the northern course of the sun. By traversing through this path, the knowers of Brahman go to Brahman and do not return to the mundane existence. The *dhūmra-mārga* consists of the deities presiding over smoke (*dhūma*), night, the dark half of the month, six months of the southern course of the sun. The *yogīs* going through this path reach the realm of the moon and they return to earth again to be reborn. The Upaniṣads provide more details of these two paths. The knowledge of these paths is important for the aspirants for *mokṣa.*

It may be observed from our analytical study of the selected verses, that this *adhyāya* brings out the importance of meditation (*upāsanā*) on *jīvātman* named as *akṣara-brahma* and also *Paramātman* since the devotees who attain these states are not subject to rebirth.

REFERENCES

1. MB on *BG,* VIII.3.
2. See *Subāla Upaniṣad* (hereinafter cited as *Sub. Up.*), II, *avyaktam akṣare līyate, akṣaram tamsi līyate.*
3. *BG,* VIII.11.
4. See *Kaṭha Up.*, II.15, *sarve vedāḥ yatpadam āmananti.*
5. Ibid., *tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam.*

CHAPTER 9

The Knowledge of the Supreme Being and the Nature of *Bhakti-yoga*

THE ninth *adhyāya* which is titled *Rāja-vidyā-rāja-guhya-yoga* is mainly devoted to enunciate the greatness of *Paramātman* and the nature of *bhakti-yoga* as the means to attain Him. As the opening verses indicate, the knowledge about the means of attainment is considered to be *rāja-vidyā* in the sense that this is the greatest knowledge. It is also called *guhya-vidyā* in the sense that it is the greatest secret.

Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna at the very outset.

> *idaṁ tu te guhyatamaṁ pravakṣyāmi anasūyave*
> *jñānaṁ vijñānasahitaṁ yaj-jñātvā mokṣyase aśubhāt.* IX.1
> *rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyam pavitram idam uttamam*
> *pratyakṣāvagamaṁ dharmyaṁ susukham kartum avyayam.* IX.2
> I shall declare to you, who does not cavil, this most secret *jñāna* together with *vijñāna*, by knowing which you shall be freed from evil.
> This is the sovereign knowledge, sovereign secret, the supreme purifier, realized by direct experience; it is in accord with *dharma* and it is very easy to practise and imperishable.

What is the *jñāna*, which is glorified as *rāja-vidyā*? What is *vijñāna*? The commentators differ in their views regarding these two terms. According to Śaṁkara, *jñāna* here means the comprehensive knowledge of Brahman. The word *vijñāna* denotes the knowledge as combined with the direct experience of Brahman (*anubhava-yuktam*). Such a knowledge is the direct means to *mokṣa* and not *upāsanā* or *karma.*

Madhva also takes the word *jñāna* as the knowledge about the glory or the majesty of the Supreme Lord with all other details (*vijñāna*). Such a knowledge is useful for obtaining the direct perception of *Paramātman* (*aparokṣa-jñāna*).

Rāmānuja interprets *jñāna* as the knowledge in the form of *bhakti,* also called *upāsanā* or the loving meditation on *Paramātman* (*bhakti-*

rūpam upāsanākhyam jñānam). *Vijñāna* means the detailed knowledge about various aspects of *upāsanā*. It is only this kind of *jñāna* in the form of *bhakti* that serves as the direct means to attain *Paramātman.*

The nature of *sādhana* for *mokṣa* constitutes the central theme of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The earlier *adhyāyas* (II-VI) of the *Gītā*, presented in detail the theory of *karma* and *jñāna*. But neither *karma-yoga* nor *jñāna-yoga*, also termed as *dhyāna-yoga* is considered as the direct means to attain *Paramātman*. The terms such as *bhajana, upāsanā, bhakti* are mentioned in the *adhyāyas* VI-VIII but there is no detailed account of the nature of *bhakti* as the means (*upāya*) for attaining *Paramātman*. It is only in the present *adhyāya* that Lord Kṛṣṇa tells about it, as is evident from the opening verse. The word *idaṁ* combined with the conjunction *tu* in the opening verse implies that what is now going to be taught is different from what was taught earlier viz., *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga*. There are several verses in this *adhyāya* which repeatedly stress the importance of *bhakti* as the *sādhana* for attainment of *Paramātman*. Taking all these facts into consideration, Rāmānuja rightly states in his brief preface to this *adhyāya* that the nature of knowledge, which takes the form of *bhakti*, is expounded in this chapter, along with the greatness of *Paramātman*, who is the object of meditation (*paramapuruṣasya māhātmyaṁ viśodhya bhakti rūpasya upāsanasya svarūpam ucyate*). As will be seen presently, the contents of this *adhyāya* also fully support this view.

Both Śaṁkara and Madhva appear to overlook this fact. The view of Śaṁkara that *jñāna* understood as the realization of the identity of *jīvātman* and Brahman is the direct means to *mokṣa* is not tenable. This view is based on the Advaita doctrine of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman, which is not explicitly supported by the *Gītā*. The view of Madhva that *jñāna-yoga*, also known as *dhyāna-yoga*, taught in the second to sixth *adhyāya* cannot serve as the direct means to *mokṣa* since the object of meditation of *jñāna-yoga*, as explained in chapter six, is not *Paramātman* but *jīvātman*. Meditation on *Paramātman* or the theory of *bhakti-yoga* comes up in the *adhyāyas* VII-XII in a specific way. As will be seen presently, the *adhyāyas* of the second *ṣaṭka* do not teach only *jñāna*, or the knowledge of the Supreme Being and His Divine majesty, as Madhva says but also the *bhakti-yoga* as the *sādhana* to attain the Supreme Being.

Speaking about the glory of the Supreme Being, Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ jagad avyakta mūrtinā
matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni na ca'haṁ teṣu avasthitaḥ. IX.4
This entire universe (of sentient souls and non-sentient entities acc. to R) is pervaded by Me in an unmanifest form. All beings abide in Me, but I do not abide in them.

The significance of this verse, as well explained by Rāmānuja, is that the Supreme Being is all-pervasive and abides in every entity, both sentient and non-sentient as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) whose presence is not known by the beings. This is the implication of the term *avyakta-mūrti* (*aprakāśita svarūpeṇa antaryāmiṇā tatam*). This fact is established by the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa which says that "He who dwells in the earth . . . whom the earth does not know" and also "He who dwells in the self . . . whom the self does not know," etc.[1] The second important significance of the verse is that *Paramātman* is the supporter or sustainer of all entities and all entities are dependent on Him for their very existence. In this sense the expression *matsthāni bhūtāni* is used. It means that all entities abide in *Paramātman* (*mayi antaryāmiṇi sthitāni*). But *Paramātman* does not abide in them in the sense that He does not have to depend on them for His sustenance, unlike the objects in the universe.

Śaṁkara explains the significance of this verse in a different way. While it is admitted that Brahman which by its nature is devoid of any form (*avyakta-svarūpa*) pervades the entire universe, all beings exist in Brahman in the sense that apart from Brahman, they really do not exist (*matsthāni māyā ātmanā ātmatvena sthitāni*). In other words, the universe does not really exist other than Brahman.

But the fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa says that the entire universe is pervaded by Him and that the former abides in Him, does not suggest the illusory character of the universe.

According to Madhva also, *Paramātman* who pervades the entire universe, is the supporter of all (*sarvādhāra*) and the latter is entirely dependent on Him for its existence.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogam aiśvaram
bhūtabhṛn na ca bhūtastho mama ātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ. IX.5
It means acc. to S.
And yet beings do not abide in Me. Behold My Divine mystery; though I am unattached to them (*asaṅgaḥ*). I am the sustainer of beings (*bhūtabhṛt*) and also the originator of beings (*bhūta-*

> *bhāvanaḥ*) in the sense that I nourish them, but My Self (*mama ātmā*) is not contained in the beings (*na bhūtastha*), because I am free from attachment.
>
> Acc. to R, it means:
>
> And yet, beings do not abide in Me, in the way the pot supports water contained in it. It is only by His will that *Paramātman* supports the beings. Behold my extraordinary power. I am the supporter of beings and yet I do not depend on them (for My existence). *Mama ātmā* which means My will (*manomaya saṁkalpaḥ*) alone sustains them.

According to Madhva, the verse signifies that though all beings are in *Paramātman*, they are not in Him in the same way in which things remain on earth through close physical contact (*matsthve' pi yathā pṛthivyām spṛṣṭvā sthitāni na tathā mayā*, etc.). The statement "*mama ātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ*" means that the body of *Paramātman* itself is the creator of beings and their supporting Self (as there is no difference between *svarūpa* and His body).

Śaṁkara's interpretation of these verses is based on his metaphysical doctrine that Brahman is the only Reality and apart from it, the universe as such does not exist. But the *Gītā* verses do not appear to lend support to this theory.

Lord Kṛṣṇa cites the following illustration (analogy) to explain how all beings depend on *Paramātman.*

> *yathā' kāśasthito nityam vāyuḥ sarvatrago mahān*
> *tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni matsthānī' ty upadhāraya.* IX.6
>
> As the mighty air, moving everywhere ever, remains in the etheric space (*ākāśa*), in the same way, you understand that all beings rest in Me.

This analogy is construed by Śaṁkara to emphasize the fact that *Paramātman* who is all-pervasive (*sarvagata*) like the *ākāśa*, can support all entities without any contact with them.

According to Rāmānuja, this analogy is intended to convey the truth that *Paramātman* is the supporter of all entities through His will (*saṁkalpa*). The mighty air remains and moves everywhere in the *ākāśa* without any perceivable support. But this implies that the air is dependent on *Paramātman* for its existence and is being upheld by Him alone through His will. In the same way, all entities abide in *Paramātman*, who is invisible to them and they are upheld by Him. The Upaniṣadic texts state that it is at the command of that

Supreme Being the sun, the moon, etc., are held in their respective place.[2]

The *Taittirīya* says: "Through the fear of Him, the wind blows, through the fear of Him the Sun rises, through the fear of Him Agni and Indra perform their duties.[3]

Madhva makes use of this analogy to point out that air abides in space but it does so without transmitting its own properties of touch and the like to space. In the same way, all entities abide in *Paramātman* but they do not transmit their qualities to Him.

Though the commentators offer different explanations, the important point to be noted is that according to the *Gītā*, *Paramātman* is the supporter (*ādhāra*) of all the entities, both sentient and non-sentient and the latter are dependent on Him for their existence. There is no suggestion in these verses that the universe comprising the sentient beings and non-sentient entities are illusory projections and are superimposed on Brahman.

The subsequent verses (IX.7-8) specifically point out that all beings originate from *Paramātman* at the time of creation and dissolve in Him at the time of dissolution.

Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtim yānti māmikām
kalpakṣaye punastāni kalpādau visṛjāmy aham. IX.7

All beings, O Arjuna, enter into the *prakṛti* (the primordial cosmic matter) which is My own at the end of the cycle (*kalpa*) or the time of dissolution. Again at the beginning of the next cycle (at the time of creation), I send them forth.

He also says:

prakṛtim svāṁ avaṣṭhabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ
bhūtagrāmam imaṁ kṛtsnam avaśaṁ prakṛter vaśāt. IX.8

Presiding over *prakṛti*, which is My own, I send forth again and again, all this multitude of beings which are helpless, being subject to *prakṛti*.

Both these verses convey that *Paramātman* is not only the supporter (*ādhāra*) of the universe, but He is also the cause of its creation and dissolution. The *prakṛti* referred to in the verse is the primordial cosmic matter in its unmanifest form (*avyakta*) which is named as *tamas* and which is the *śarīra* or body of *Īśvara* in the sense that it is sustained and controlled by Him. The same *prakṛti* is called as *māyā* by Śaṁkara and regarded as *mithyā* (illusory). It is through this *prakṛti*, the universe is caused to evolve into the manifest universe at the time of creation and the same is also made to dissolve into the original causal state viz., unmanifest *prakṛti* or *tamas* at the time of dissolution. The dissolution does not imply total destruction but the assumption of a subtle state (*sūkṣmāvasthā*).

Lord Kṛṣṇa further points out that these creations of beings of unequal status does not bind Him in any way.

> *na ca māṁ tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya*
> *udāsīnavad āsīnam asaktaṁ teṣu karmasu.* IX.9
>
> Nor do these actions bind me, O Arjuna, for I am seated as if indifferent and I am unattached to those actions.

The implication of this verse, acc. to S is that *karmas*, interpreted as creative activities which bring forth the multitude of beings of inequality, do not bind the Lord because He is unconcerned with them, being indifferent spectator and also unattached to them (*asakta*). This is based on the premise that the Self (Brahman) is *avikriyā* or not subject to any modification. Madhva presumably means by *karma*, the deeds and their consequences. The expression "indifferent" should not be supposed that the Lord is indifferent. It only means that He is unattached (*asakta*). The Lord who is free from personal attachment cannot be affected by the consequences of the deeds.

Rāmānuja offers a more satisfactory explanation. The word *karmāṇi* does not mean the actions in the form of *puṇya* and *pāpa*. But on the contrary, it refers to God's creation of variegated individuals of inequality such as celestial deities and human beings etc. The question arises whether God, who is the creator of them, is subject to the blemishes of partiality and cruelty (*nairghaṇya vaiṣamya doṣa*). The answer is in the negative since the creation of individuals is in accordance with their past *karmas* or deeds for which God is not responsible. The *karmas* of the individual selves are responsible for the inequality of conditions such as celestial beings, human beings, lower forms of life, etc.

Though the Supreme Being causes the creation and dissolution of the universe, He is not involved in them for He is untouched by the consequences of the cosmic events. It is the work of the *prakṛti* constituted of the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, as is evident from the following verse:

mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa carācaram
hetunā' nena kaunteya jagad viparivartate. IX.10
Under my guidance, *prakṛti* gives birth to all things, moving and unmoving. Because of this, O Arjuna, the world revolves.

Acc. to S, *prakṛti,* which is *māyā* of *Paramātman* evolves itself into the variegated universe due to the mere presence of the sentient *Paramātman* who is only a witness(*sākṣī*). The creation is caused by the *māyā* of the Supreme Person and as a mere witness He has no connection with the consequences of creation.

Rāmānuja explains the verse in a different way. *Paramātman* is the controller and supervisor of the *prakṛti* which belongs to Him. But the evolution of *prakṛti* takes place through His will (*saṁkalpa*). The consequences of creation are due to the *karmas* of individuals and as such *Paramātman* is untouched by them.

After expounding the glory or the majesty of the Supreme Being, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells that the deluded persons (*mūḍha*) do not know His greatness and even despise Him. But the noble-minded people, who have the knowledge of the greatness of *Paramātman,* worship Him with devotion.

Thus He says:

satatam kīrtayanto māṁ yatantaśca dṛḍhavṛtāḥ
namasyantaśca māṁ bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate. IX.14
Always repeating or singing my glory, striving with steadfast resolution (vows acc. to S), bowing down to Me with devotion, they worship Me (meditate on Me acc. to R), aspiring for the eternal communion with Me.

The verse refers to three important modes of worship viz., *kīrtana, yatana* and *namaskāra. Kīrtana* means the singing of the glory of God. Rāmānuja interprets it as "repeating the names of God. Śaṁkara means by it, *śravaṇa, praṇava, japa,* etc. Madhva takes it as *nāma saṅkīrtana* or singing the glory of the Lord.

Yatana, acc. to S means the effort to obtain *brahma-jñāna* by means of control of senses, cultivation of virtues such as *śama* and *dama.* Acc. to R, it means activities such as *arcanā* or worship of God, services at temples, etc. For Madhva it means engaging oneself in worship of God. *Namaskāra* means prostrating before God with devotion. All these form part of *upāsanā* or *bhakti-yoga* to be described later which is to be observed for attaining communion with *Paramātman.* The words "*māṁ bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate*" signify that those craving for union with *Paramātman* resort to *upāsanā* or devoted meditation.

There are also other ways of meditation on *Paramātman*. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *jñāna-yajñena cā'pyanye yajanto mām upāsate*
> *ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham.* IX.15
>
> Others too (also) by adoring with knowledge as sacrifice (*yajña*), meditate on Me as the one, as distinct and as manifold or multiformed.

This verse is interpreted differently by the commentators. Śaṁkara takes this verse as referring to three classes of worshippers of God, whereas for Rāmānuja and Madhva, it speaks of only one class of worshippers. According to Śaṁkara, *jñāna-yajña* means the knowledge of *Paramātman* itself as *yajña* and this knowledge is the realization of the truth that Brahman is the only Reality (*evam-eva paramabrahma iti paramārtha darśanena upāsate*). Some others worship God in different forms as the sun, moon, etc. They worship them thinking that Viṣṇu Himself exists in different forms. Still others worship Him thinking that very God who is multi-formed (*viśvatomukha*), who has His face everywhere, exists variously (*bahudhā*).

Madhva, on the other hand, means by *ekatvena* that one Supreme Being who is present everywhere is only Nārāyaṇa and people meditate and offer sacrifices to Him with this firm conviction. Others worship the same God as different from all other beings (*pṛthaktvena*). *Bahudhā* means variously, that is, His forms shine in various hues, as stated in the *smṛti* texts.

Rāmānuja offers a more satisfactory explanation in conformity to what is said in the previous verse. That is, other noble persons worship God by *kīrtana, yatana,* etc., and also perform *yajña* named as *jñāna*. They worship Him, who being characterized by the diversity in the form of variegated universe, is of multiform viz., having all entities as modes and also as one (*bahudhā pṛthaktvena jagadākāreṇa viśvatomukhaṁ viśvaprakāram avasthitam māṁ ekatvena upāsate*). In other words, the *Paramātman* as associated with *cit* and *acit* in its unmanifest form prior to the creation, assumes (becomes) by His *saṁkalpa*, the multiform, that is, as *Paramātman* associated with *cit* and *acit* in their manifest forms. People meditate on Him by contemplating this form.

The subsequent verses (16-19) bring out the universal form of *Paramātman* (*viśvatomukham*) by stating that He is everything in the universe in the sense that He abides in all as the Inner Controller.

Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *ahaṁ kratur aham yajñaḥ svadhā' ham aham auṣadham*
> *mantro'ham ahameva ājyam aham agnir aham hutam.* IX.16
> I am the ritual action, I am the sacrifice. I am the oblation offered to the manes. I am the medicinal herb, I am the hymn. I am also the melted butter. I am the fire and I am the offering.

In the same strain it is stated: "I am the father of the world, the mother, the creator (*dhātā*), the grandfather of the universe (*pitāmahaḥ*). I am the purifier, I am the syllable *Om* and also the *ṛk, sāma* and *yajus* as well." (IX.17)

> I am the goal (*gatir*), the supporter, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend. I am the origin and the dissolution, the ground, the resting place and the imperishable seed. (IX.18)

He finally says:

> *tapāmy aham ahaṁ varṣam nigṛhṇāmy utsṛjāmi ca*
> *amṛtam caiva mṛtyuśca sad asac cā'ham arjuna.* IX.19
> I give heat; I withhold and send forth rain. I am the immortality and also death. I am the being as well as non-being, O Arjuna.

The significance of these verses acc. to S is that the Supreme Lord grants our prayers in whatever form we worship Him since everything in the universe is Brahman (*brahmasvarūpa*). The entities as such which we think of as different from Brahman are illusory projections caused by *māyā* or *avidyā*, but in reality there is no such real entity other than Brahman.

This explanation would be justified if the doctrine of *māyā*, as conceived by Śaṁkara is tenable. It is not so, according to the *Gītā*. Rāmānuja and Madhva, therefore explain the significance of these verses in a different way. According to Rāmānuja, all these entities are Brahman in the sense that these entities constitute His *śarīra* in the technical sense that He supports and controls them from within and that He is their Self or *śarīri* in the sense of indwelling Self as described by the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa. *Paramātman* is the one Reality as the *śarīrin* having manifold universe of souls and material objects as His *śarīra.* The noble souls meditate on Him conceiving that Supreme Being as one (*ekatvena*) as abiding in all entities (*pṛthak-tvena bahudhā viśvatomukham*).

According to Madhva, the significance of these verses is that Viṣṇu (God) as the one Supreme Being is present everywhere and He is worshipped or meditated as different from all other beings. The equation of the Supreme Being as *kṛtu, mantra,* etc. implies that everything in the world depends for "what it is, how it is, why it is so and what it is constituted of" on the immanent and energizing presence in it of the Supreme Lord.

Lord Kṛṣṇa further emphasizes the greatness of the noble-minded persons who meditate on God with unswerving devotion by comparing them to the knowers of the three Vedas, who perform Vedic sacrifices for achieveing *svarga* (heaven) and the heavenly pleasures of the other divine beings such as Indra. These persons who go to heaven do come back to this world of mortals after their *puṇya* is exhausted (*kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokam viśanti*). But in the case of noble-minded persons who meditate on *Paramātman* seeking no other goal than Him, God takes care of them. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *ananyāś cintayanto māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate*
> *teṣāṁ nityabhiyuktānāṁ yogakṣemaṁ vahāmy aham* IX.22
> But for those who meditate on Me with complete devotion seeking no other end but Me, and who aspire for eternal union with Me, I take care of the responsibility of their attaining the desired goal and also its eternal retention (*apunarāvṛtti kṣema*).

The words *ananyāḥ cintayanto māṁ* are interpreted by Śaṁkara in the sense of conceiving *Paramātman* as non-different from oneself. This does not appear to be the correct import of the verse. In the context of the meditation on *Paramātman* with devotion for the purpose of attaining Him as the Supreme Goal, the difference between the *upāsaka* and the *upāsya* is to be admitted.

The significance of this verse is, as Rāmānuja explains, that as contrasted with the people seeking other goals such as heavens etc. the noble persons seeking only *Paramātman* and performing devoted meditation on Him, are looked after by *Paramātman* by enabling them to attain the desired object and also its eternal enjoyment without the possibility of return to the world of bondage.

Madhva also takes a similar view. The word *ananyāḥ* in the verse does not mean "non-different from Brahman." On the contrary it refers to those who have no other objects of desire and thought of other deities than the worship of the Supreme Lord. In other words, these are the persons who are always thinking of the Lord alone and nothing else (*ananya anyad acintayitvā*).

Lord Kṛṣṇa points out that even those who are devoted to other deities and worship them with faith, worship *Paramātman* only in so far as He is the indwelling self of all these deities and who is the enjoyer and who is also the bestower of the desired fruits through those deities. But the worshippers of these deities are not aware of this and hence they fall (subjected to rebirth).

> *aham hi sarva yajñānām bhoktā ca prabhureva ca*
> *na tu māṁ abhijānāti tattvena ataḥ cyavanti te.* IX.24
> I am the enjoyer (the one worshipped, acc. to R) and the Lord of all sacrifices. But those men do not know Me in my true nature and hence they fall.

The devotees of celestial deities go to the realms of the respective deities, of the spirits (*bhūtas*) go to the spirits. And those who worship *Paramātman* attain Him only.

Further Lord Kṛṣṇa tells that it is easy to worship *Paramātman* who is pleased even with small offering, if it is made with love and earnestness. Thus He says:

> *pattraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyaṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*
> *tad ahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ.* IX.26
> Whosoever offers to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept that offering of love made by the one who is pure of heart.

The verse emphasizes that the offering of any of these articles, which are easily available, would serve the purpose of worship of God. All that is required on the part of the devotee is love for God, which is termed as *bhakti* and purity of heart.

After stating the simple modes of worship such as *kīrtana, arcana, praṇāma,* etc. Lord Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna to cultivate (develop) the spirit of dedication of all activities—both mundane and religious, to *Paramātman* which would constitute an important requirement (feature) of *bhakti-yoga,* to be taught later. (IX.34)

> *yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat*
> *yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam.* IX.27
> Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in the

fire, whatever you give away, whatever austerity you practise, do that O Arjuna, as a dedication to Me.

The development of this spirit of dedication or renunciation in respect of all activities undertaken by a devotee helps to overcome the bonds of *karma*, leading to the attainment of *Paramātman.* Thus says the *Gītā*:

śubhāśubhaphalair evaṁ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ
saṁnyāsayogayuktātmā vimukto māṁ upaiṣyasi. IX.28
With your mind thus equipped with the *yoga* in the form of renunciation (dedication of all actions to Me), you will be freed from the bonds of *karma* causing good and evil consequences. Thus liberated, you shall come to Me (attain Me).

In this connection, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells that He is the same (*sama*) to all beings:

samo' haṁ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo asti na priyaḥ
ye bhajanti tu māṁ bhaktyā mayi te teṣu ca'pyaham. IX.29
I am the same to all beings. None is hateful or dear to Me. But those who worship Me with devotion, they abide in Me and I abide in them.

The implication of this verse, acc. to S, is that God is impartial, but He favours those who worship Him and not others. Rāmānuja explains it in a different way. God as the sole refuge, is the same for all beings, irrespective of their status of birth, nature and knowledge. Hence no one is hated or no one is looked as dear. But He likes those who worship Him as their sole refuge because He is exceedingly dear to them and they also feel that they cannot sustain themselves without worshipping Him. According to Madhva, God is equally fair to all beings. "There is none whom He cherishes more than his devotion merits and none whom He chastises more out of proportion to his offences."

The important point to be noted is that *bhakti* or devotion to God is held in high esteem by *Paramātman.* This is substantiated in the following two verses.

api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananyabhāk
sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ. IX.30
Even if a man who has committed the most sinful acts, worships Me with undivided devotion, he must be regarded as righteous

or saintly (*sādhu*) for his resolve or conviction is in the right direction.

kṣipraṁ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvat śāntiṁ nigacchati
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati. IX.31
Very soon he becomes a person of righteousness and obtains everlasting peace. O Arjuna, know thou for certain that My devotee never perishes.

The word *dharmātma* implies acc. to R, the significance of *bhakti* or devoted meditation on God, which would enable one to remove the sins standing as the obstacles for the attainment of God.

Lord Kṛṣṇa finally urges Arjuna to worship Him.

anityam asukham lokam imam prāpya bhajasva mām. IX.33
Having entered this impermanent and sorrowful world, you worship Me.

After emphasizing the importance of *bhakti* as the means of attainment of *Paramātman*, and instructing him to worship Him, Lord Kṛṣṇa describes its nature (*bhakti-svarūpa*) in the following concluding verse.

manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru
mām evai'ṣyasi yuktvai'vam ātmānam mat parāyaṇaḥ. IX.34
Fix your mind on Me. Be devoted to Me. Worship Me. Bow down to Me. Engaging your mind in this manner and regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, you will reach Me.

This is an important verse in the *Gītā*, which, in the opinion of Rāmānuja, defines the nature of *bhakti* as the direct means of attaining *Paramātman* (*bhakti-yoga*). The three significant concepts *manana* with *bhakti*, *yajña* with *bhakti* and *namaskāra* with *bhakti* imply the characteristic features of *bhakti-yoga*, as fully explained by Vedānta Deśika in his *Tātparya-candrikā*.

According to Śaṁkara-bhāṣya, in the preceding verse Lord Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna to worship Him (*bhajasva māṁ*) and with reference to this, He describes in the present verse, the manner in which one should worship Him. *Manmanā bhava* means to have one's mind fixed on *Paramātman* (Vāsudeva) and *madbhaktaḥ* means to be devoted to Him. *Madyāji* means to be engaged in worshipping Him. *Maṁ namaskuru* means to bow down or to show reverence to Him. *Yuktva* means "by concentrating one's mind" and *matparāyaṇaḥ* means to accept *Paramātman* as the Supreme Goal. *Māṁ ātmānaṁ aiṣyasi eva* means "you shall surely attain Me, who is the self of all." That is *Paramātman* is the self of all beings and also the Supreme Goal. Though it is not explicitly stated in the bhāṣya, the implication of one's attainment of *Paramātman* is, according to the fundamental doctrine of Advaita, that one becomes the Self (Brahman) in the sense of realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman. Alternatively, it is to be taken as attainment of *Saguṇa* Brahman which is the first stage of *mukti* and later on become Brahman itself, in accordance with the theory of *krama-mukti.* Accordingly, the *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* cannot be the direct means to *mokṣa,* as Rāmānuja maintains.

Madhva does not comment on this verse. However, *bhakti* which is taught in this *adhyāya* is an important component of *dhyāna-yoga* referred to in the sixth *adhyāya* and it is a means to *aparokṣa-jñāna* or the direct vision of *Paramātman* which leads to *mokṣa.* We shall discuss the merits of these views in the chapter on General Evaluation.

Now coming to the commentary of Rāmānuja on this verse. *Manmanā bhava* means to focus one's mind on *Paramātman.* It also denotes *dhyāna,* also named as *nididhyāsana* or *upāsanā* or *dhruvāsmṛti* in the Upaniṣads, which means the unceasing meditation on *Paramātman* who is the Supreme Brahman, who is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, who is endowed with infinite auspicious attributes, free from all defilements and who possesses a divine body. The meditation is to be practised with devotion (*madbhakta*). *Madyājī bhava* means the devotee should become engaged in the worship of God. The root word *yaj* means *pūjā* or worship and in the present context, it refers to the various modes of worship of God as laid down in the Pāñcarātra treatises (*bhagavadārādhanā*). This again is to be performed with love towards God. *Maṁ namaskuru* means to bow down or prostrate with humility to God regarding Him as the Supreme Being and the *jīvātman* as a humble being solely dependent on Him (*śeṣa*). *Matparāyaṇa* means to regard *Paramātman* alone as the Supreme Goal. *Ātmānam yuktva* means that in this manner the mind is to be disciplined towards God as the Supreme object of attainment. *Ātmā* in this context means mind and not Self as Śaṁkara conceives. *Māmeva aiṣyasi* means with such a practise of *bhakti-yoga,* one will surely attain only *Paramātman.* This explanation which is in consonance with the teachings of the *Gītā*, establishes that *bhakti-yoga* is the direct means to *Paramātman*.

REFERENCES

1. *Bṛ. Up.*, V.7.3, *yaḥ pṛthivyām tiṣṭhan . . .yaṁ pṛthvī na veda. yah ātmani tiṣṭhan . . . yaṁ ātmā na veda. . . .*
2. Ibid., V.8.9, *etad vai akṣaram gārgi sūryācandramasau vidhṛtau tiṣṭhataḥ. . . .*
3. *Taitt. Up.*, II.8.1, *bhīṣāsmāt vātaḥ pavate bhīṣodeti sūryaḥ. . . .*

CHAPTER 10

The Theory of God and His Glory

THE tenth *adhyāya* which is titled *Vibhūti-yoga* describes in greater detail the Glory of the Supreme Lord. This knowledge of the Lord's *vibhūti* generates devotion (*bhakti*) which is useful for meditation upon *Paramātman* as is evident from the following verse.

> *etāṁ vibhūtiṁ yogaṁ ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ*
> *so' vikampena yogena yujyate na tra saṁśayaḥ.* X.7
> He who knows in truth the *vibhūti* and *yoga* of Mine, becomes imbued with unshakable *bhakti-yoga.* There is no doubt about it.

The term *vibhūti* is interpreted by Śaṁkara as the divine manifestations and *yoga* as the power (*śakti*) of God. For Rāmānuja, *vibhūti* means Lordship (*aiśvarya*) of God and the word *yoga* means the splendour of His auspicious attributes free from defilements. Madhva means by *vibhūti,* the greatness of the Lord (*mahatvam*) and by *yoga,* the capacity of the Lord (*sāmarthyam*). Though these terms are interpreted differently, it is to be admitted that according to the *Gītā,* the knowledge of the *vibhūti* of *Paramātman* is helpful for practising *bhakti-yoga* which is the central theme of the second *ṣaṭka.*

At the outset Lord Kṛṣṇa says that even the hosts of celestial deities and the great sages do not know comprehensively, the abundance of the divine power since He is the source (*ādiḥ*) of all deities and sages who are endowed with limited knowledge.

Speaking of His greatness Lord Kṛṣṇa says that He is unborn (*aja*), without beginning (*anādi*) and *lokamaheśvara* or the Supreme Lord of the world.

The word *lokamaheśvara* signifies, as explained by R, that the Supreme Being is the Lord of all other higher celestial deities such as Brahmā, who are the rulers of different realms.

The *Gītā* points out that the mental states such as intelligence (*buddhi*), knowledge (*jñāna*), non-delusion (*asaṁmoha*), forbearance (*kṣamā*), truth (*satya*), self-control (*dama*), calmness (*śama*), etc., are caused by the Supreme Being out of His will (*saṁkalpa*). Even the seven great sages of yore and the four *manuṣ* who are the progenitors of all the creatures in the world are also subject to the will of the Supreme Lord.

In a more specific way Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante māṁ budhā bhāvasamanvitāḥ. X.8
I am the origin of all and from Me proceeds everything. Knowing this, the wise worship Me with all devotion.

The word *sarvasya* means the entire universe of sentient beings and non-sentient entities. *Prabhava* means He is the sole cause of the universe (*utpatti kāraṇam*). *Sarvam pravartate* means acc. to S, that everything in the universe, that is its sustenance, destruction, action and enjoyment of fruits of action take place owing to the Supreme Being. By knowing *Paramātman* in this manner, the men of wisdom meditate on Him with ardent devotion.

The *Gītā* points out how these persons worship *Paramātman.*

maccita madgata prāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam
kathayantaś ca māṁ nityam tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca. X.9
With their mind focussed on Me, with their lives (*prāṇas*) given up to Me, enlightening each other and always thinking of Me, they are contented and revel in Me.

Such persons who worship *Paramātman* with ardent devotion are bestowed with the vision of Himself. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

teṣām satatayuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ prītipūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena māṁ upayānti te. X.10
Acc. to S, it means:
To those who are constantly devoted to Me and worship Me with love (*prītipūrvakam bhajatāṁ*), I grant wisdom or full enlightenment regarding my true nature (*samyag darśanam mattattvaviṣayam tena yogaḥ*) by which they can come to Me.
Acc. to R, it means:
For those who crave for eternal union with Me and meditate on Me, I grant lovingly (*prītipūrvakam*) that clear vision of Me, by which they come to Me.

This is an important verse, which brings out how the devoted meditation leads to attainment of *Paramātman.* According to this verse, the *buddhi-yoga* which is granted by *Paramātman* in response to the constant loving meditation on Him, leads to the attainment of *Paramātman,* as conveyed by the words *yena māṁ upayānti.* If this statement is correctly understood, as explained by Rāmānuja, *buddhi-yoga* should mean the perfected state reached by continuous practice of *bhakti-yoga.* It is the culminating stage of *nididhyāsana* resulting in *darśana* or a clearer vision of God by means of which *Paramātman* is attained. But Śaṁkara interprets this verse in a different way to fit with his doctrine of identity of *jīva* and Brahman. The term *buddhi-yoga* is therefore taken in the sense of *samyag-darśana* or the realization of the true nature of Brahman, that is *jīva* as the same as Brahman. The devoted worship of *Paramātman* bestows this wisdom by which the *jīvātman* realizes that he is the same as *Paramātman* (*yena buddhi-yogena samyagdarśana lakṣaṇena māṁ parameśvaram ātmabhūtam ātmatvena upayānti*). But the words in the verse *māṁ upayānti te* do not convey the idea of *jīva* becoming one with *Paramātman* after obtaining the *samyag-darśana* granted by God's grace in response to the devoted meditation on Him.

Madhva takes *buddhi-yoga* as *aparokṣa-jñāna* leading to *mokṣa.*

Arjuna, after hearing this brief account of the Glory of the Supreme Lord, was convinced about the fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Brahman, as is evident from the following verse addressed to Him.

> *parama brahma parama dhāma pavitram paramaṁ bhavān*
> *puruṣaṁ śāśvatam divyam adidevam ajaṁ vibhum.* X.12
> You are the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Light and the Supreme Purifier.
>
> *āhustvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣir nāradas tathā*
> *asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayam caiva bravīṣi me.* X.13
> All the seers proclaim you as the eternal Divine Person, the Primal Lord, the unborn and all-pervading. So also Nārada, the divine sage, Asita, Devala and Vyāsa. You yourself teach me the same.

Arjuna also says that he holds as true all that is stated by Lord Kṛṣṇa (*sarvam etad ṛtam manye*). He admits that only the Supreme Person (*Puruṣottama*), who is the creator and the Lord of all beings (*bhūta bhāvana* and *bhūteśa*) and the Ruler of the universe (*jagatpati*) knows His own nature.

As pointed out by Rāmānuja, the terms employed in these verses denote the important attributes of the Supreme Being. The same expressions are used by the Upaniṣad and the *Mahābhārata* to describe Brahman. This confirms that Lord Kṛṣṇa to whom these are addressed, is the *Para* Brahman of the Upaniṣad.

In response to the request of Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells His Divine Glory or manifestations (*divya ātma vibhūtayaḥ*). He first states in a general way:

> *aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ*
> *aham ādiśca madhyaṁ ca bhūtānām anta eva ca.* X.20
> O Arjuna, I am the Self dwelling in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings.

The implication of this verse, acc. to S, is that *Paramātman* is the indwelling Self (*pratyagātmā*) who is ever to be meditated on as residing in the hearts (*āśaye*) of all beings. If one is unable to do so, He is to be meditated upon as the origin or the creator, as the sustainer and as the destroyer of all beings. This explanation is based on the premise that the self of each individual is the same as *Paramātman.* But the theory of the identity of the self and *Paramātman* is not supported by the *Gītā*, according to Rāmānuja and Madhva.

Rāmānuja takes the word *ātman* in this verse as the *antaryāmin* or the Inner Controller of all beings, as declared in the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa and also in the *Gītā.*[1] The term *atman* signifies that which supports and controls the body (*śarīra*). It is in this sense that the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* describes all entities including the individual self as the *śarīra* or body in a metaphysical sense viz., that which is sustained and controlled by a sentient being. Hence the statement "*ahamātmā sarvabhūtāśaya sthitaḥ*" implies, according to Rāmānuja, that *Paramātman* indwells in the individual selves and non-sentient entities as *antāryamin* or Inner Controller.

After stating in a general way that *Paramātman* indwells in all beings as *ātman,* Lord Kṛṣṇa enumerates a large number of selected entities which are equated with Him. Thus He says:

> *ādityānām ahaṁ Viṣṇuḥ jyotiṣāṁ ravir aṁśumān;*
> *marīcir marutām asmi nakṣatrāṇām aham śaśī* X.21
> Of the Ādityas (Vedic gods), I am Viṣṇu. Of the luminous bodies, I am the radiant sun. Of the Maruts, I am Marīci. Of the stars I am the moon.

In the same strain Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions about the Vedas, celestial deities, Rudras, Vasus, Yakṣas and Rākṣasas, Gandharvas, great sages, mountains, trees, horses, elephants, cows, snakes, beasts, birds, water creatures, rivers, goddesses, seasons, months, etc. (vv. 22-38). While enumerating each of these entities, the best among them is selected and stated to be Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.

What is the significance of this equation or the identity of the best of each entity with Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself?

According to Śaṁkara, the *Paramātman* is to be meditated upon in the manner described in each case, that is, as the most glorious among these entities (*evam ca dhyeyaḥ aham*).

For Madhva, the *vibhūtis* enumerated in the *Gītā* do not denote the various celestial deities, the mythological persons and the terrestrial objects. On the other hand they represent the hidden forms of the Lord Himself by virtue of whose presence in the various beings and objects, the latter come to be invested with exceptional merit, status or distinction within their own class or kind as a whole or part of it.[2] All these are the real forms of God, like the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu and they are intended to reveal the Glory of *Paramātman*, the knowledge of which promotes *bhakti*.

Rāmānuja offers a more satisfactory explanation. The statements "I am the sun," "I am Indra" etc. do not mean that the sun or Indra is the same as *Paramātman* in the sense that apart from *Paramātman*, the sun or Indra do not exist as a distinct real entity, as interpreted by Śaṁkara. Nor does it imply that the sun or Indra is the hidden form of *Paramātman*, as Madhva contends. In a sentence or judgement where two terms are expressed in the same *vibhakti*, such as "I am a human being" (*manuṣyo'ham*), it conveys the idea of the body-soul relation. That is "I" denoting the individual self is inherently related to the body as the sustainer and controller of it. In the same way, in all these statements, the entities such as the living beings and the non-sentient objects, which are equated with Lord Kṛṣṇa imply that *Paramātman* is the universal Soul of all these entities in the sense that He as the indwelling Self is the sustainer and controller of the entities which are His bodies in the technical sense of their being supported and controlled by Him. This explanation is supported by the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which speaks of body-soul relation (*śarīra-śarīri bhāva*) between Brahman as *antaryāmin* and the sentient and non-sentient entities as the *śarīra* of *Paramātman*. The two verses in the concluding part of this *adhyāya* also affirm this view.

yaccāpi sarvabhūtānāṁ bījam tadaham arjuna
na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtam carācaram. X.39
Whatsoever is the seed of all existences, I am that, O Arjuna.
Nothing that moves or does not move, exists without Me.

The verse conveys, as explained by Rāmānuja, that whatever is in the universe, owes its existence to *Paramātman* as its Self. The implication of this is that *Paramātman* being the Self of all things is the ground and supporter of the Universe.

This point is made more explicit by the following concluding verses:

yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā;
tad tad eva avagaccha tvam mama tejoṁśasaṁbhavam. X.41
Whatever being is endowed with glory or of splendour or of energy, know that to have come from a fragment of My power.

viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat. X.42
I remain sustaining this universe (of both sentient beings and non-sentient entities) by a fraction of My power.

It thus follows that *Paramātman* is everything in this universe in the sense that He is the indwelling Self (*antaryāmin*) of the latter which constitute His body, since it is sustained and controlled by Him. In the light of this explanation, the entire universe is regarded in a broad philosophical sense as the *vibhūti* or Glory of the Supreme Lord. The universe which is sustained and controlled by *Paramātman* through His will cannot therefore be illusory, though it is dependent for its existence on *Paramātman.*

REFERENCES

1. *BG,* XV.15, *sarvasya cā'ham hṛdi saṁniviṣṭaḥ* and XVIII.61, *Īśvaraḥ sarva bhūtānāṁ hṛddeśe arjuna tiṣṭhati, bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.*
2. See *Gītā-tātparya: yeṣāṁ viṣṇusvarūpāṇāṁ sannidher anyavastusu; viśiṣṭatvam svajāteḥ syāt vibhūtyākhyāni tāni tu.* See also B.N.K. Sharma, *The Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya of Madhvācārya,* p. 214.

CHAPTER 11

The Cosmic Form of God

THE eleventh *adhyāya* which is named as *Viśvarūpa-darśana-yoga* presents a detailed account of the cosmic form of *Paramātman.* After listening to the description of the Lord's greatness, Arjuna longs to see directly the full Divine Form (*draṣṭum icchāmi te rūpam aiśvaryam*). In response to this ardent desire, Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals to Arjuna His Supreme Divine Form by granting him spiritual sight, since it is not possible to see it with the physical eye.

> *evam uktvā tato rājan mahā yogeśvaro hariḥ*
> *darśayāmāsa pārthāya paramaṁ rūpam aiśvaram.* XI.9
> Having spoken thus, Hari, the Great Lord of *yoga,* then revealed to Pārtha (Arjuna), His Supreme Divine Form.

According to the description of the *Gītā,* Arjuna sees all the creatures in heaven and earth in this Divine Form:

> *tatraikasthaṁ jagat kṛtsnaṁ pravibhaktam anekadhā*
> *apaśyad devadevasya śarīre pāṇḍavas tadā.* XI.13
> There (in that Divine body), Arjuna beheld the whole universe with its manifold division gathered together in one single spot within the body of the Supreme Deity.

Arjuna was struck with amazement after seeing the wondrous form of the Lord. The vv. XI.15-30 present a graphic description of the *viśvarūpa* of the Lord as actually witnessed by Arjuna. He beholds in the body of Lord Kṛṣṇa, all the celestial deities and varied hosts of beings as well as Brahmā, Īśāna (Śiva), the sages and the heavenly snakes. He also sees the infinite form of God on all sides with multitude of faces, eyes, arms and stomachs. He finds that the Lord is shining as a mass of light with crown, mace and disc dazzling on all sides with the radiance of the flaming fire and sun. After seeing this wondrous form, Arjuna realizes that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Reality.

tvam akṣaram paramaṁ veditavyaṁ tvam asya viśvasya param nidhānam
tvam avyayaḥ śāśvatadharmagoptā sanātans tvaṁ puruṣo mato me. XI.18

Thou art the imperishable Reality, the Supreme to be realized. Thou art the ultimate ground of this universe. Thou art the undying guardian of the eternal law (*dharma*). Thou art the Supreme Person, I think.

It may be noted that this verse substantiates that Lord Kṛṣṇa as the personal God, is the same as *Para* Brahman of the Upaniṣads designated as *akṣara* or that which is imperishable. The *Gītā* does not speak of two Brahmans or two forms of Brahman as *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa*, as some commentators on Śaṁkara-bhāṣya state.[1]

Further, Arjuna finds that the Lord is one without a beginning, middle or end, of infinite power, having innumerable arms, having the sun and the moon as eyes, having the face like a blazing fire, whose radiance burns up this universe. He perceives that the space between heaven and earth, as also all the directions are pervaded by the Lord. He sees how the hosts of great sages and *siddhas* adore the Lord with hymns of abounding praise. The celestial deities such as Rudras, Ādityas, Vasus, Sādhyas, etc. all gaze at Him with awe.

Arjuna also beholds the terrific form of Lord Kṛṣṇa and expresses some fear in the following words.

nabaḥspṛśam dīptam aneka varṇaṁ vyattānanaṁ dīptaviśālanetram
dṛṣtvā hi tvāṁ pravyathitāntarātmā dhṛtiṁ na vindāmi samaṁ ca viṣṇo. XI.24

When I see your figure touching the sky (highest heaven, acc. to R), blazing with many hues, with the mouth wide open and large glowing eyes, my inner being trembles with fear and I find neither steadiness nor peace.

daṁṣṭrakarālāni ca te mukhāni dṛṣṭvai'va kālānalasaṁnibhāni
diśo na jāne na labhe ca śarma prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa. XI.25

By a mere look at your faces which appear terrible with their fangs (teeth), which resemble the destructive fire of the universe, I lose sense of the directions and find no peace.

Arjuna also sees the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra along with the hosts of kings and also Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa along with the chief warriors, rushing into the fearful mouths of the Lord, some of them are found sticking between the teeth of the Lord with their heads crushed. This makes Arjuna realize that the Supreme Being is not only the creator of all beings but also the destroyer of evil forces. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself says in reply to the query made by Arjuna, as to why He reveals to him this terrible form.

> *kālo' smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho lokān samāhartum iha pravṛttaḥ*
> *ṛte'pi tvāṁ na bhaviṣyanti sarve ye avasthitāḥ pratyanīkeṣu yodhāḥ.* XI.32
> I am the world-destroying time, engaged in subduing the world. Even without you (your effort), all the warriors standing arrayed in the opposing armies shall cease to be.

This indicates that God who is responsible for both creation and destruction, has already ordained the death of the warriors confronting Arjuna as a retribution for evil-doing and that Arjuna is only an instrument (*nimitta mātram*) for their death.

After hearing the utterance of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna in an ecstasy of adoration and anguish praises the Supreme Being. These hymns of praise contain expressions which convey important characteristics of the Supreme Being.

> *tvam ādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇas tvam asya viśvasya parama nidhānam*
> *vettā'si vedyam ca parama ca dhāma tvayā tataṁ viśvam ananta-rūpa.* XI.38
> Thou art the first of celestial deities, the Primal Person, the Supreme Resting Place or Support of the universe.Thou art the knower and that which is to be known and the Supreme Goal and by Thee this universe is pervaded, O Thou of infinite form.

> *namaḥ purastād atha pṛṣṭhataste namo'stu te sarvata eva sarva*
> *anantavīryāmitavikramas tvaṁ sarvaṁ samāpnoṣi tato'si sarvaḥ.* XI.40
> Hail to Thee in front, hail to Thee behind, hail to Thee on every side. O! You of infinite power and immeasurable might, pervade all beings and therefore Thou art all.

Acc. to S, God is everything (*sarvaḥ asi*) in the sense that by virtue of the one Self pervading everything in the universe, no entity exists without Him. Rāmānuja who does not admit the unity of the Self (*ātmaikya*), explains it in the sense that God, by virtue of His immanence in all beings as *antaryāmin*, is everything in the universe. Arjuna also states:

pitāsi lokasya carācarasya tvam asya pūjyasya gurur garīyān
na tvat samo'sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto' nyo lokatraye'pi apratima-prabhāva. XI.43
You are the father of the world, of the moving and unmoving.
You are the venerable teacher and the one most worthy of worship. There is none equal to you. How then could there be in the three worlds, another one greater than you?

After seeing the universal form of God, Arjuna requests Lord Kṛṣṇa to reveal the form as it was before with the crown, four arms, mace and disc. Accordingly Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals His own form. In this connection, He tells Arjuna that it is only through unswerving *bhakti* or loving devotion to *Paramātman*, that it is possible to know, to see and to attain the Supreme Being. The relevant verses read:

nā' haṁ vedair na tapasā na dānena na ce'jyayā
śakya evamvidho draṣṭuṁ dṛṣṭavān asi māṁ yathā. XI.53
bhaktyā tu ananyayā śakya aham evaṁvidho' rjuna
jñātuṁ draṣṭuṁ ca tattvena praveṣṭuṁ ca parantapa. XI.54
I cannot be seen in the form you have seen me now, either by the Vedas or by the austerities or by gifts or by sacrifices.
But by unswerving (single-minded) devotion to Me, O Arjuna, I can be thus truly known, truly seen and entered into (attained).

The first verse points out that by mere study and teaching of the sacred texts, it is not possible to know *Paramātman* fully. Nor is it possible to know Him fully through performance of *yāga* or sacrifices and other austerities (*tapas*) and also offering gifts. That is, none of these acts devoid of *bhakti* towards *Paramātman* serves the purpose of knowing Him in His true form.

In what other way can He be known? The second verse answers this. It is only through the means of *ananya-bhakti* towards *Paramātman* that it is possible to know Him fully. *Ananya-bhakti* is needed not only for knowing *Paramātman* in His full form but also for obtaining His full vision (*draṣṭuṁ*) and also to attain Him (*praveṣṭuṁ*).

These are the three stages of the *bhakti* as the *sādhana* or the means for attainment of *Paramātman*: (1) to obtain full knowledge of *Paramātman* through study (*śravaṇa*) and reflection (*manana*), (2) to have a direct clear vision of *Paramātman* (*darśana*) through unceasing meditation (*nididhyāsana*), and (3) to attain *Paramātman* in the state of *mokṣa* (*praveśa*). At each stage undivided *bhakti* is required. This verse elucidates the implication of the statement of the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* which says:

> *nā'yam ātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutena; yameva eṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ, tasyaiva eṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām.*[2]
>
> This Self (*Paramātman*) cannot be obtained by mere instruction (*pravacana*) which stands for *manana* nor by mere meditation (*medhayā* or *dhyāna*) nor by much hearing (*śravaṇa*). Whomsoever He chooses, by him alone He is obtained. To such a person He reveals His own form.

This Upaniṣadic text implies that *śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana* enjoined by *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* as the *sādhana* for *mokṣa* needs to be observed along with *bhakti,* which secures for the devotee the attainment of *Paramātman* through His grace, showered on him in response to *ananya-bhakti* towards Him.

The term *ananya-bhakti* is interpreted by Śaṁkara in a different way. It means single-minded devotion which does not turn to anything else than the Supreme Lord, owing to which nothing else but Vāsudeva is perceived by all the organs (*bhagavataḥ anyatra pṛthak na kadācidapi bhavatī. Sarvairapi karaṇaiḥ Vāsudevād anyat na upalabhyate yathā sa ananya bhaktiḥ*). This interpretation implies that other than *Paramātman* nothing else really exists.

According to Rāmānuja, the word *ananya* which qualifies *bhakti* implies in the present context that meditation is to be directed to *Paramātman* and not to any other deity (*ananya devatā*) and also for the sole purpose of attaining Him and not any other goal (*ananya prayojana*). But the idea of performing meditation by realizing that other than Vāsudeva there is no other object is not borne out by the verse.

The concluding verse sums up the teaching on the *bhakti-yoga* with all its aspects. Kṛṣṇa says:

> *matkarmakṛn matparamo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ*
> *nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava.* XI.55
>
> He who works for Me, he who looks upon Me as his highest goal, He who is devoted to Me, free from attachment and enmity towards all creatures, he comes to Me (attains Me), O Arjuna.

Śaṁkara regards this verse as containing the essential teaching of the *Gītāśāstra* (*Gītāśāstrasya sārabhūta arthaḥ*).

According to him, all the work that is done by a devotee is to be directed towards God (*matkarmakṛt*). He is to be looked upon as his Supreme Goal (*māmeva paramāṁ gatim pratipadyate*). He should adore God alone in all ways with his whole being and enthusiasm (*māmeva sarvaprakāraiḥ sarvātmana sarvotsāhena ca bhajate*). Further he should be devoid of attachment for wealth, sons, friends, wife and relatives (*saṅga vivarjitaḥ*). He should not entertain any enmity towards all beings including those who may do harm to him. For such a devotee, *Paramātman* alone is the Supreme Goal (*ahameva tasya parā gatiḥ*). This is the meaning of *sa māṁ,* etc.

Rāmānuja brings out more clearly the significance of this verse. The word *matkarma* refers to the acts such as the study of Vedas, *tapas, dāna, ijyā,* etc., mentioned in the earlier verse (XI.5),which are to be performed as modes of worship (*mad-ārādhanarūpāṇi*). *Matparama* means he who looks upon God alone as the highest goal in all his enterprises. *Madbhakta* means one who is deeply devoted to God to such an extent that he feels unable to sustain himself without reciting His names (*kīrtana*), praising Him (*stuti*), meditating upon Him and worshipping Him (*arcana*), etc., and who always performs these acts by considering God as the Supreme Goal to be attained. He is *saṅga-varjita* or free from attachments. Since he is solely devoted to God, he is unable to have attachment to any other thing. He is without enmity (*nirvairaḥ*) since he considers the sufferings caused to him as due to his own sins. Such a devotee attains God in His true form (*yathāvad avasthitam prāpnoti*).

Madhva does not comment on these verses.

Thus, this *adhyāya,* though it covers mostly the *viśvarūpa* or the cosmic form of *Paramātman,* emphasizes that *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* is the direct means to attain *Paramātman,* which is the central theme of the second *ṣaṭka,* as stated by Rāmānuja.

REFERENCES

1. See Nilakantha, ŚB on *BG,* X.18, *etena saguṇa rūpasya nirguṇajñāpakatvam uktam.*
2. *Kaṭha Up.,* I.2.23.

CHAPTER 12

The Theory of *Bhakti-yoga*

THE twelfth *adhyāya* deals with the subject of meditation on *Paramātman* as the means to attain Him. This is evident from the opening verses which refer to the relative superiority of the *upāsanā* on *Paramātman* vis-à-vis the *upāsanā* on *akṣara* and which extol that the former is more efficacious than the latter for attaining *Paramātman* in an easier way.

At the outset Arjuna raises a question:

> *evam satatayuktā ye bhaktās tvāṁ paryupāsate*
> *ye cā'py akṣaram avyaktaṁ teṣām ke yogavittamāḥ.* XII.1
> Those devotees, who seek eternal union with you, meditate on you with devotion and those who meditate on the unmanifest *akṣara*, which of these (persons) have the better knowledge of *yoga*?

The verse as it reads speaks of two categories of *upāsakas*: Those who meditate on *Paramātman* and those who meditate on *akṣara* which is characterized as *avyakta*. A distinction is made on the basis of the object of meditation viz., *Paramātman* and *akṣara*. Are these the same or different? Obviously they have to be different as otherwise there is no justification in seeking enlightenment as to which of the two categories of persons is a better *yogī*. However, the commentators widely differ in their views regarding this point.

According to Śaṁkara, *akṣara* which is characterized as *avyakta* denotes the imperishable higher Brahman (*Para* Brahman) which is absolutely undifferentiated (*nirguṇa*) as distinct from *Paramātman* which is *saguṇa* or endowed with attributes. He points out that the earlier *adhyāyas* from II-X teach about the meditation on the Supreme Self, the immutable which is devoid of all attributes. But in the eleventh *adhyāya* dealing with the cosmic form of Brahman, meditation on *Paramātman* is suggested. Arjuna therefore raises the question: Of these two kinds of devotees which one is better versed in *yoga*? (*atiśayena yogavit*). According to Śaṁkara, those who meditate on the immutable (*akṣara*) are free from all desires since they have renounced all *karmas* and as such they are qualified to realize the Supreme Being. But those who have not renounced all desires and given up all *karmas* are required to resort to the meditation on Personal God or Brahman in the cosmic form. Thus, according to Śaṁkara's interpretation, the implication of the query of Arjuna is whether he should worship the Absolute Brahman which is impersonal and unrelated to the universe or Brahman as manifested in the cosmic form in the name of *Īśvara* or personal God.

According to Madhva, the term *avyaktākṣara* denotes Goddess Śrī (Lakṣmī) who is the presiding deity of non-sentient *prakṛti.* In his opinion the present *adhyāya* is devoted to explain the *upāsanā* on *Paramātman* which is superior to that of *avyakta tattva* or Goddess Śrī (*avyaktopāsanād bhagavadupāsanasya uttamatvam pradarśya tadupāyam pradarśayati asmin adhyāye*). The justification for introducing the theory of *upāsanā* on Goddess is that such an *upāsanā* is also helpful to attain *mokṣa.* Madhva finds some support for this view in a few Śruti and Smṛti texts which are quoted by him.

Rāmānuja takes the term *akṣara* to denote *jīvātman* in its true form. It is *avyakta* in the sense that its nature cannot be grasped by the sense organs. The verse refers to two types of spiritual aspirants. (1) Those who are deeply devoted to *Paramātman* on whom they meditate, as explained in the preceding *adhyāyas* and (2) those who meditate on *jīvātman* which is imperishable (*akṣara*) and not graspable by the sense organs (*avyakta*). The first *ṣaṭka* deals with the meditation on *jīvātman,* whereas *adhyāyas* VII-XI deal with the meditation on *Paramātman.* Hence the question raised by Arjuna is: which of these two categories of devotees is *yogavittama*? The implication of *yogavittama,* according to Rāmānuja is: of these two categories of persons, who would attain the respective goals sooner (*teṣāṁ ubhayeṣāṁ ke yogavittamaḥ, ke svasādhyam prati śīghragāminaḥ ityarthaḥ*).

Śaṁkara's interpretation would be justified if the theory of two forms of Brahman as *para* or higher which is absolutely undifferentiated (*nirguṇa*), designated as *akṣara* and *apara* or lower which is endowed with attributes (*saguṇa*) known as *Īśvara* or personal God is admitted. But this theory is not warranted by the *Gītā,* both according to Rāmānuja and Madhva. The meditation on *ātman* (*jīva*) referred to in the earlier *adhyāyas* is not the same as Brahman, that is Brahman as conditioned by *upādhi.* Besides, *akṣara* which is regarded as Brahman by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is not undifferentiated Being, as Śaṁkara conceives because the same *akṣara* is described in the subsequent passage of the Upaniṣad as *praśāsitāra* or the one endowed with the power to rule or command. The *Gītā* also does not explicitly state *akṣara* as *Para* Brahman is distinct from the personal God.

Madhva's view of *akṣara* as Goddess Śrī is also not justified since in the earlier *adhyāyas* there is no mention of meditation on Goddess Lakṣmī as the means to attain *mokṣa.* It does not therefore appear to be appropriate to raise the question regarding the *upāsanā* on Lakṣmī vis-à-vis the *upāsanā* on *Paramātman* in the present verse.

In the context of the teachings of the earlier *adhyāyas* which speak of meditation on *jīvātman* and also *Paramātman,* it is relevant to take the *upāsanā* on *akṣara* as that on *jīvātman.* The word *akṣara* also denotes *jīvātman* since it is imperishable. It is also *avyakta* since it is not graspable by the senses.

The subsequent verses (XII.2-8) explaining the relative merits of the two paths support the view adopted by Rāmānuja.

In reply to the question of Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

mayyāveśya mano ye māṁ nityayuktā upāsate
śraddhayā parayo'petās te me yuktatamā matāḥ. XII.2

Those who meditate on Me by focusing their mind on Me with supreme faith and ever desirous of attaining Me (*nityayuktā*), they are considered by Me as the highest among yogins.

This verse clearly points out that the one who practises devoted meditation on *Paramātman* is the best (*yuktatama*).

In what sense he is the best? As Rāmānuja explains, he is the best since these devotees attain *Paramātman* soon in an easy way (*sukhena acirāt prāpnuvanti*).

The following verses describe the meditation on *akṣara*:

ye tu akṣaram anirdeśyam avyaktaṁ paryupāsate
sarvatragam acintyaṁ ca kuṭastham acalaṁ dhruvam. XII.3

But those who meditate on the imperishable (*akṣara*), the undefinable, the unmanifest, the omnipresent (which resides everywhere acc. to R), the inconceivable, the unchanging (common to all beings acc. to R), the immovable and the constant.

> *saṁniyamya indriyagrāmaṁ sarvatra samabuddhyayaḥ*
> *te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarvabhūtahite rataḥ.* XII.4
> By restraining all the senses, by being even-minded in all conditions (seeing the same self in all bodies acc. to R) and engaged in the welfare of all beings, they too attain Me (a status similar to Me—*samya* or *sadharmya* acc. to R).

These verses speaking of meditation on *akṣara* are construed by Śaṁkara in favour of *Para* Brahman. The terms employed to describe *akṣara* as *avyakta, acintya,* etc., appear to support it. But as we have already observed, this view is not tenable since *akṣara* in the present context means *jīvātman.* Similarly the theory of *akṣara* as Śrī-*tattva* is also not warranted by the *Gītā.* It is therefore appropriate to take *akṣara* as denoting *jīvātman.* The *upāsanā* on *jīvātman* is referred to in the earlier *adhyāyas* whose goal is the realization of the true nature of the self (*ātmāvalokana*). Those who meditate on *jīvātman* also attain *Paramātman* in the sense that they realize the essential nature of the self which is similar to that of *Paramātman* in respect of freedom from bondage (*mat samānākāraṁ asaṁsāriṇaṁ ātmānaṁ prāpnuvanti*). The *Gītā* itself says in a later *adhyāya* that *jīva* attains a status similar to *Paramātman* (*mama sādharmyam āgatāḥ*).[1]

The subsequent verses speaking of the hardship involved in the meditation on *akṣara* further substantiates the view of Rāmānuja. The relevant verse reads:

> *kleśo adhikataras teṣām avyaktāsakta cetasām*
> *avyaktā hi gatir duḥkham dehavadbhir avāpyate.* XII.5
> Greater is the difficulty of those whose minds are set on the unmanifest (*avyakta*), for the goal of the unmanifest is hard to reach by the embodied beings (acc. to S) or the access to the unmanifest is attained with greater difficulty by the embodied beings (acc. to R).

According to Śaṁkara, the term *avyakta* denotes the *Para* Brahman denoted by *akṣara,* which is undifferentiated and hence its realization is considered difficult by the embodied persons who cannot easily get rid of the illusion of the identification of the self with the body. But the term *akṣara* in the present context is *jīvātman.* The *Gītā* itself says in a later *adhyāya* that *jīva* is *akṣara* which is imperishable and unchanging (*kuṭastho akṣara ucayate*).[2] Those who meditate on *jīvātman* confront greater difficulty since they cannot easily get rid of the attachment to the body.

Even if *akṣara* is taken as *Para* Brahman, as stated in the *Muṇḍaka* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upaniṣads, it is not undifferentiated, since the same *akṣara* is described as *bhūtayoni* or cause of the universe and *praśāsitāra* or the one possessing the power to command. Besides, an undifferentiated Being cannot be the object of meditation.

The meditation on *avyakta* taken as Goddess Śrī is plausible but it is not clear from the comments of Madhva as to why this path (*gati*) is confronted with hardship. Madhva merely states that through the meditation on *Śrītattva* it is difficult to reach *Paramātman* (*avyaktopāsana dvāraka matprāpti mārgo duḥkham avāpyate*). Further unless the *upāsanā* on *avyakta* is a necessary and subsidiary means to *bhakti-yoga* on *Paramātman,* as *jñāna-yoga* is to *bhakti-yoga,* as held by Rāmānuja, there seems to be no justification in prescribing *avyaktopāsanā* to the devotees aspiring for *mokṣa.* The *Gītā* also does not teach in the earlier *adhyāyas* about *avyaktopāsanā,* so that it may be justified for Arjuna to seek clarification as to which of these two categories of devotees is *yogavittama.*

After discussing the relative merits of the two types of meditation, one on *Paramātman* and the other on *akṣara,* Lord Kṛṣṇa categorically affirms the superiority of those who meditate on *Paramātman* with devotion. Thus He says:

> *ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṁnyasya matparāḥ*
> *ananyenai'va yogena māṁ dhyayanta upāsate.* XII.6
> *teṣām ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsāra sāgarāt*
> *bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha mayy āveśitacetasām.* XII.7
>
> For those who dedicate all actions to Me, who accept Me as their Supreme Goal, and worship Me by meditating on Me with devotion.
>
> For those whose minds are thus focussed on Me, I straightway deliver from the ocean of death (bondage).

It is obvious from these verses that the devoted meditation on *Paramātman* (*bhakti-yoga*) is the easier means of attaining *mokṣa,* rather than the hard path of meditation on *akṣara.*

Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore exhorts Arjuna to follow this path:

> *mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhim niveśaya*
> *nivasiṣyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ.* XII.8
>
> Focus your mind on Me alone, and let your understanding (conviction) rest on Me. Thereafter you will abide in Me alone.

There is no doubt about this.

It may not be possible to develop the concentration of mind on *Paramātman* straightaway. For such persons, the *Gītā* suggests various steps by which it can be gradually achieved. Thus it says:

> *atha cittaṁ samādhātuṁ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram*
> *abhyāsa-yogena tato mām icchā'ptum dhanañjaya.* XII.9
> If you are not able to focus your mind on Me, then seek to reach Me by the repeated practice of contemplation.

According ro Rāmānuja this *abhyāsa-yoga* is the effort made repeatedly to control the mind by contemplating on the object of meditation (*Paramātman* and His auspicious attributes).[3] For Śaṁkara also *abhyāsa* consists in repeatedly fixing the mind on a single object.

The next lower step to be adopted is:

> *abhyāse'pyasamartho' si matkarma paramo bhava*
> *madartham api karmaṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi.* XII.10
> If you are not able to observe the repeated practice of contemplation, then devote yourself to the performance of deeds as service to Me. Even by doing service for Me, you will attain perfection.

Acc. to R, *matkarma* refers to the various divine services such a building temples, laying out temple gardens, offering flowers and fruits for worship, lighting lamps, etc. Acc. to S, *matkarma* means works or deeds meant for *Paramātman.*

If this is not possible, another step is recommended:

> *athai'tad apy aśakto'si kartum madyogam āśritaḥ*
> *sarvakarmaphalatyāgam tataḥ kuru yatātmavān.* XII.11
> If you are not able to do even this, after having resorted to my *yoga* (*bhakti-yoga* acc. to R), then with the mind controlled, renounce the fruits of all actions.

The term *madyoga* means for Śaṁkara the deeds performed as dedicated to *Paramātman* (*mayi kriyamāṇāni karmāṇi saṁnyāsya yat karaṇam teṣām anuṣṭānam madyogam*).

Rāmānuja takes this word to mean *bhakti-yoga* since in this context the methods to be adopted for developing concentration of mind are recommended. *Matkarmaparama* referred to in the earlier verse in a broad sense implies *karma-yoga,* which is the subsidiary aid to *bhakti-yoga* and through performance of divine deeds one can develop concentration of mind. In this context *sarva-karma-phala tyāga* along with the control of mind and senses (*yatātmavān*) refers to the *jñāna-yoga* taught in the first *ṣaṭka* (*adhyāyas* II-VI). By the observance of *jñāna-yoga,* which involves meditation on *jīvātman,* also named as *akṣara,* one obtains a clear vision of the true nature of the self and this will generate *bhakti* in *Paramātman* (*parā bhakti*).[4] This interpretation of the verse offered by Rāmānuja gives greater relevance to the three easier steps viz., *abhyāsa-yoga, matkarma-parama* and *sarvakarmaphalatyāga* with the control of mind—which serve as aid (*aṅga*) to *bhakti-yoga* as the direct *sādhana* for the attainment of *Paramātman.* Madhva does not comment on these verses.

The next verse which makes a relative evaluation of these steps substantiates the above view of Rāmānuja:

> *śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāt jñānād dhyānaṁ viśiṣyate*
> *dhyānāt karmaphalatyāgas tyāgat śāntir anantaram.* XII.12
> Better indeed is the knowledge (of the self) than the repeated practice (of remembrance of the Lord); better than the knowledge is the meditation; better than meditation is the renunciation of the fruit of action. From such renunciation comes peace.

The significance of this verse which speaks of the relative merits of *abhyāsa, jñāna, dhyāna,* and *tyāga,* is explained in different ways by the commentators. According to Śaṁkara, the verse praises renunciation (*tyāga*) of the fruits of all actions. Knowledge is taken as that which is preceded by discrimination. In other words it is discriminating knowledge. *Abhyāsa* is the repeated effort to ascertain the true meaning of the sacred texts in order to acquire knowledge. The discriminating knowledge is therefore better than *abhyāsa.* The *dhyāna* or the meditation undertaken along with knowledge is better than mere discriminating knowledge. The renunciation of the results of work excels even the meditation associated with knowledge. With the renunciation of the results of actions by the way of dedicating them to God, follows *śānti* or peace, which is taken in the sense of cessation of bondage along with its root cause (*upaśamaḥ sahetukasya saṁsārasya*). Thus *karmaphalatyāga* leading to cessation of bondage is of greater importance than *dhyāna* or meditation. This explanation of Śaṁkara is based on the assumption that the meditation on *Paramātman* in its cosmic form and the performance of *karma* (*karma-yoga*) with the renunciation of the fruits of deeds are intended for persons who are not suitable for meditation on the immutable higher Brahman (*akṣara*). For one who has renounced all deeds and the desire for their results and who has realized the identity of the self with God (Brahman), the observance of *karma-yoga* and *dhyāna* on the cosmic form of God is not required. Whether or not this assumption is tenable is open to dispute, since the *Gītā* does not explicitly mention the distinction between Brahman as personal God and Brahman as *akṣara* or higher undifferentiated entity.

According to Madhva, *jñāna* is better than mere *abhyāsa* taken in the sense of contemplation without knowledge. *Dhyāna* is better than such knowledge. From *dhyāna* arises *aparokṣa-jñāna* which actually leads to *śānti* or *mukti.* Mere *tyāga* does not help to attain *mukti.* The mention of *śānti* as arising from *tyāga* is only laudatory acc. to M (*kevala tyāgastutireva*). According to Madhva's explanation, *dhyāna* or meditation on *Paramātman* associated with *tyāga* is accorded due importance since that leads to liberation (*na hi tyāga mātra anantarameva muktir bhavati. Bhavati ca dhyāna-yuktāt*).

Rāmānuja offers a more satisfactory explanation which stands justified in the context of the teaching about the importance of *bhakti-yoga* on *Paramātman* as the means to attain Him. *Jñāna* in the present verse which is considered better than *abhyāsa* stands for the direct knowledge of the true nature of the self arising from the contemplation on the self designated as *akṣara* in the opening verses. Such a knowledge of the self is definitely better than mere *abhyāsa* or repeated remembrance of God devoid of devotion to Him since it is conducive to the well-being of the self (*aparokṣa jñānam eva ātmahitatve viśiṣyate*). *Dhyāna* which is understood in the present context as meditation on *jīvātman* is better than the imperfect knowledge of the self and it is more beneficial to the self. Even this meditation on the self, if it is not accompanied with renunciation of the desire for fruits of action, would not be of much significance. Hence it is stated that renunciation of fruits of action is better than mere meditation on the self. By the renunciation of fruits of action, one attains *śānti* or peace of mind as a result of the eradication of the sins. When the mind is at peace, it is possible to have undisturbed meditation on the self. The meditation on *jīvātman* leading to the vision of the self is helpful to embark on the unswerving meditation on *Paramātman* and attain Him easily. Thus, the various lower steps suggested by Lord Kṛṣṇa, viz., performance of deeds without desire for fruits and by dedicating them to God (*matkarma parama*), peace of mind (*śānti*), meditation on the self (*dhyāna*), realization of the true nature of the self (*jñāna*) and devotion to God (*bhakti*) become interrelated and useful for the practice of *bhakti-yoga.*

In this connection, Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions several important qualities of the true devotee. The vv. 13-19 enumerate them. These are: non-hatred towards all beings (*adveṣṭā*), friendliness and compassion towards others (*maitrī* and *karuṇā*), being free from egoism and self sense (*nirmama nirahaṁkāra*), even-mindedness in pain and pleasure and patience (*kṣamā*). It also states that the *yogī* is ever content (*santuṣṭaḥ*), self-controlled, unshakable in determination and his mind dedicated to God. He is not a source of grief to any nor can one make him feel grief. He who has no expectation, is pure, skilful in action, unconcerned and untroubled. The Lord says:

He who neither rejoices nor hates, neither grieves nor desires and who has renounced good and evil, he who is thus devoted is dear to Me.

In a more characteristic way, the *Gītā* describes him:

> *samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ*
> *śitoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitaḥ.* XII.18
>
> He who behaves alike to foe and friend, also to good and evil repute and who is alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain and who is free from attachment.

While enumerating these qualities, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that such a devotee is very dear to Me (*yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*).

The important point to be considered is whether these various qualities of an ideal *bhakta* are applicable to those who have renounced the results of all *karmas* (*sarvakarmaphalatyāga*) referred to in the earlier verse as an easy step to develop concentration of mind (v.11) or do they apply to devotees who are *upāsakas* of *akṣara,* understood as *Para* Brahman which is undifferentiated (*nirguṇa*). According to Rāmānuja these qualities are to be cultivated by the devotees who embark on the path of *karma-yoga* which requires the disinterested performance of *karmas* (*anabhisaṁhitaphala-karma-niṣṭasya upādeyān guṇān āha*).[5] According to Śaṁkara all these qualities are applicable to the *akṣaropāsakas* or those who meditate on *akṣara,* who are steadfast in the knowledge of the self and who have renounced all *karmas* and the desires for their fruits (*akṣaropāsakānāṁ samyag-darśana-niṣṭānāṁ saṁnyāsināṁ tyakta-sarvaiṣaṇānāṁ adveṣṭā sarva bhūtānāṁ ityādi dharmapugaṁ sākṣāt amṛtatva-kāraṇam vakṣyāmi iti pravartate*).[6]

According to Madhva, these attributes of *adveṣṭṛtva*, etc., referred to in vv. XII.13-19 are intended to elaborate and elucidate what is implied in v. XII.6 viz., those who meditate with devotion on *Paramātman* by way of dedicating all deeds to God. In other words, these qualities are applicable to the *upāsakas* who meditate on *Paramātman* with unswerving devotion.[7]

Śaṁkara's interpretation would be justified if *akṣara* referred to earlier, is taken as the immutable *Nirguṇa* Brahman and meditation on *akṣara* is admitted. As we have observed earlier, this is not the case. Besides, as Madhva points out, the description of the devotee of *Paramātman* (*yo mad bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*) repeated in these verses along with the qualities of the devotee does not allow for the conception of *akṣaropāsanā*, in the sense understood by Śaṁkara. The preceding verses (6-11) speak of the devotees who meditate on *Paramātman.* Contextually, Śaṁkara's view is therefore not tenable.

As regards Rāmānuja's view, it is also possible and also tenable to speak of these qualities in respect of a *karma-yogin*, since in the preceding verses the observance of *sarvakarmaphalatyāga* is laid down as an easier step to develop concentration of mind. This is a prerequisite of *karma-yoga* observed as a subsidiary means to *bhakti-yoga.*

The following concluding verse establishes beyond any doubt that the meditation on *Paramātman* as the direct *sādhana* to *mokṣa* is of greater importance than the *upāsanā* on *akṣara* taken as *jīvātman.* Thus it is stated:

> *ye tu dharmyā-mṛtam idaṁ yathoktaṁ paryupāsate*
> *śraddhadāna matparamā bhaktās te atīva me priyāḥ.* XII.20
>
> But those devotees who follow the virtuous path (*bhakti-yoga*) as taught above, which is like a nectar or bliss, with full faith and regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, they are exceedingly dear to Me.

The word *dharmyam* means for Śaṁkara, that which is indistinguishable from virtues stated in vv.13-19 and this is called *amṛta* or nectar since it leads to immortality. The *bhaktas* are those monks (*saṁnyāsins*) who adhere to these virtues and accept with faith that *Paramātman* is identical with the *akṣara* or immutable higher Brahman and as the Supreme Goal. Such devotees are very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. On this interpretation, the knowledge of the Supreme Reality as means of liberation is given greater importance than the meditation on *Paramātman* (*bhakti-yoga*) as the direct means of liberation. But the main objective of this *adhyāya* is to establish that the devoted meditation on *Paramātman* is of greater importance than the meditation on *akṣara* taken as *jīvātman*. Rāmānuja therefore interprets *dharmyāmṛtam* to mean virtuous duty (*sādhana*) which is like *amṛta* since it secures immortality (*dharmyaṁ ca amṛtaṁ ca iti dharmyāmṛtam*). This is *bhakti-yoga* as conveyed in the opening verse which states:

"Those who resort to *upāsanā* on *Paramātman* as the Supreme Goal, they are considered very dear to the Lord."[8]

Madhva also takes a similar view. *Dharma* means Lord Viṣṇu (*dhārakatvāt dharma*). Whatever contributes to His *upāsanā* is *dharmyaṁ*. *Amṛtaṁ* means what destroys death, decay and other aspects of transmigratory life. *Dharmyāmṛtaṁ* signifies the means leading to the Lord and immortality. Thus *bhagavad-upāsanā* is of greater importance than *akṣaropāsanā* (taken as meditation on Goddess, acc. to M).

From the foregoing analytical and critical study of the twelfth *adhyāya*, it may be observed that the second *ṣaṭka*, of which the present chapter is the concluding one, presents the theory of *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* as the direct means of attaining *Paramātman*.

REFERENCES

1. *BG*, XIV.2.
2. Ibid., XV.16.
3. See *TC*, XII.9, *ālaṁbane punarpunaḥ sthāpanam abhyāsaḥ sa eva yogaḥ*. See *BG*, VI.35, *abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyena ca gṛhyate*, cf., *YS*, I.12, *abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ*.
4. See RB on *BG*, XII.11, *tataḥ anabhisaṁhitaphalena madārādhana rūpeṇa anuṣṭitena karmaṇā siddhena ātma-jñānena nivṛtta-avidyādi-sarva-tirodhāne matśeṣataika svarūpe pratyagātmani sākṣat-kṛte sati mayi parā-bhaktiḥ svayam eva jāyate*. See also *BG*, XVIII.50-55 and ch. 18, pp. 189-90.
5. RB on *BG*, XII.13.
6. ŚB on *BG*, XII.13.
7. See MB on *BG*, XII.11, *madupāsakānāṁ na kaścit kleśa iti darśayati, ye tu ityādina* (XII.6-11).
8. *BG*, XII.2, *mayyāveśya mano ye māṁ nityayuktā upāsate, śraddhayā parayo'petas te me yuktatamā mataḥ*.

CHAPTER 13

The Theory of *Kṣetra* and *Kṣetrajña*

THE thirteenth *adhyāya* is titled *kṣetra-kṣetrajña vibhāga yoga* or the theory of the distinction between the field and the knower of the field. This actually constitutes the first chapter of the third hexad (*ṣaṭka*) of the *Bhagavadgītā* comprising a group of six chapters. Regarding the scope and subject-matter of this hexad as related to the first and second, there is some difference of opinion among the three commentators. According to the followers of Śaṁkara, the first and second hexad deal with the import of the term "Thou" and "That" respectively, whereas the third hexad is concerned with determining the fuller import of the Upaniṣadic text "That thou art" (*tattvamasi*) as a whole. Śaṁkara, however, in his preface to the thirteenth *adhyāya* states that the seventh *adhyāya* refers to the two aspects of God viz., *aparā prakṛti* or the cosmic matter consisting of three *guṇas* and *parā prakṛti* or the *jīvātman* which is essentially the *Īśvara* or God. The present *adhyāya* is intended to determine the nature of God who possesses these two aspects.

According to Madhva, the third *ṣaṭka* is in the form of a review of the preceding two. The present *adhyāya* is a condensed and coordinated exposition of some of the main topics dealt with in the earlier *adhyāyas*, such as *aparokṣa-jñāna* elucidated in the first six *adhyāyas*, the object of this knowledge viz., the Supreme Lord and His glory, the nature of *kṣetra* (cosmic matter) and the *jīvas*.

Rāmānuja offers a different explanation regarding the scope and subject-matter of the third hexad and also the present *adhyāya*. In the preface to this *adhyāya*, he points out that the first hexad deals with *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* whose aim is the realization of the true nature of the self (*ātmāvalokana*). This subserves the *bhakti-yoga* or the loving meditation on *Paramātman* by means of which the Supreme Goal is attained. The second group of six chapters directly deals with the nature of the Supreme Being and also *bhakti-yoga*. The third hexad reexamines the topics dealt in the preceding hexads viz., *prakṛti, puruṣa, Paramātman, karma, jñāna,* and *bhakti* with a view to determining their distinctive nature. This explanation provides a well-connected and meaningful unity for the entire philosophical teachings of the *Gītā.*

The commentators are agreed that the present *adhyāya,* as its title suggests, deals specifically with the discussion of the distinctive nature of *kṣetra* or the field and *kṣetrajña* or the knower of the field, though they widely differ in their views regarding the fuller import of the two terms. The first verse offers a definition of these terms. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

idaṁ śarīraṁ kaunteya kṣetram ity abhidhīyate
etad yo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetrajña iti tadvidaḥ. XIII.1

The general meaning of the verse is: 'O son of Kuntī (Arjuna), this body is called the field (*kṣetra*). He who knows it is called the knower of the field (*kṣetrajña*), by those who have the knowledge of this (the true nature of the body and self).'

The body is regarded as *kṣetra* since it serves as the media for experiencing the pleasure and pain by the soul. Śaṁkara says that it is so called because it is protected (*tra*) against injury (*kṣata*) or because it perishes (*kṣi*) and wastes away (*kṣa*), or because the results of actions get fulfilled in the body as in a field (*kṣetra*). The self is called *kṣetrajña* since as a conscious principle it knows the body. According to Rāmānuja, the fact that the self knows the body establishes that the sentient self as the knower is different from the non-sentient body, just as in the judgement "I know the pot," the principle "I" as the knower is different from the pot as the object of knowledge.

While both Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja take the word *kṣetrajña* as the individual self, Madhva interprets *kṣetrajña* as *Paramātman* and *kṣetra* as the cosmic universe. But this view would not be tenable if we consider the subsequent verses which bring out the fuller implications of these terms and in particular the relation of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* to *Paramātman.*

The second verse reads:

kṣetrajñaṁ cā'pi māṁ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata
kṣetra kṣetrajñayor jñānaṁ yat taj jñānaṁ mataṁ mama. XIII.2

O Arjuna, know Me also as the knower of the field in all the fields (and also the field, acc. to R). That knowledge regarding the field and the knower of the field is considered by Me as true knowledge.

This is an important verse which speaks about the relation of *kṣetrajña* to *Paramātman* and it is interpreted differently by Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja. Śaṁkara construes this verse in favour of the identity of *jīvas* and Brahman, whereas Rāmānuja takes the verse to convey the idea of immanence of *Paramātman* in all the *jīvas* and also the cosmic matter, as the Indwelling Self and thereby establish the organic relationship between the two. The crucial statement in the verse is: *kṣetrajñaṁ cā'pi māṁ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu.* It means, acc. to S, know Me (*Paramātman*) as the knower of the field (*kṣetrajña*) in all the fields (*sarvakṣetreṣu*). The implication of this, acc. to S, is that the Supreme God is the same as the *kṣetrajña* or the knower of the field existing in all the bodies. That is, the one *Paramātman* who is undifferentiated has become diversified as many *kṣetrajñas* due to the limiting adjuncts in the form of many *kṣetras* or bodies and *antaḥkaraṇas.* With the removal of the limiting adjuncts, the *kṣetrajña* or *jīva* becomes the *Paramātman.* Śaṁkara defends this explanation with elaborate arguments based on the doctrine of *avidyā* due to which one Brahman becomes many being conditioned by several limiting adjuncts, just as the one all-pervasive ether (*ākāśa*) appears as many due to the limiting adjuncts in the form of several receptacles. The soundness of this theory depends on the tenability of the doctrine of *avidyā* as conceived by Śaṁkara. Both acc. to R and M, the *Gītā* does not support the theory of *avidyā.* According to the *Gītā, jīvas* are eternal and they are different from *Paramātman.*[1]

Rāmānuja therefore interprets the statement "*kṣetrajñāṁ cā'pi māṁ viddhi*" in a different way. The expression "*kṣetrajñaṁ mam viddhi*" does not mean that *Paramātman* denoted by *māṁ* is the same as *jīvātman* (*kṣetrajña*) since the two ontological entities of different nature cannot be identical. It therefore conveys the idea that *jīvātman* who abides in different bodies as the knower (*jñātā*) is ensouled by *Paramātman,* the word *māṁ* being interpreted as *madātmakam.* The conjunction *api ca* along with *kṣetrajña* implies also *kṣetra* or the field, which is ensouled by *Paramātman.* This interpretation is justified on the basis of the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* which declares that *Paramātman* abides in all non-sentient and sentient entities as the *antaryāmin* or Inner Controller.[2] The *Gītā* also supports this theory. Thus says the

Gītā: *aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarva bhūtāśayasthitaḥ*[3]—"I am the Self, dwelling in the hearts of all beings."

Madhva however differs from both Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja. As explained in his *Gītā-tātparya*, the words *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* are not to be understood in the narrow sense of body and soul. But on the contrary, *kṣetra* refers to the entire field of *prakṛti* or the primordial cosmic matter and *kṣetrajña* denotes the Supreme Being. "*Kṣetrajñāṁ ca māṁ viddhi*" should therefore mean, acc. to Madhva, "Know Me as the Supreme Being abiding in all fields" (*kṣetrajñaṁ māṁ sarvakṣetreṣu sthitatvena viddhi*). The justification for taking this view is that the later verse speaks of His *prabhāva* or greatness as one who controls and regulates the entire cosmos as is conveyed by the statement "*sa ca yo yat prabhāvaśca.*" Madhva also quotes a few Smṛti texts in which Viṣṇu is designated as *kṣetrajña* (*kṣetrajño bhagavān Viṣṇuḥ na hy anyaḥ kṣetra manyase*).

The word *kṣetrajña* can also mean the Supreme Being. But with reference to the opening verse in which it is defined as the knower of *kṣetra* or body, it cannot be said that in the second verse it bears a different meaning as *Paramātman*. The meaning of the word should be consistently the same in both the verses. Besides, the word *māṁ* referring to *Paramātman*, which stands in apposition to *kṣetrajña* with a conjunction *api ca* should have some significance. Either the two terms *kṣetrajña* and *māṁ* standing in apposition (*samānādhikaraṇa*) should mean that the two are identical, as Śaṁkara interprets, or they are one in the sense of organic unity, similar to the body as related to the soul, as Rāmānuja maintains. The view of Śaṁkara in favour of absolute identity is not sustainable, since two distinct ontological entities of different characteristics cannot be identical. Besides, the doctrine of *avidyā* adopted to explain the one Reality becoming many, is not warranted either by the *Gītā* or the Upaniṣads. The other plausible explanation is to interpret this statement to mean that the *kṣetrajñas* are ensouled by *Paramātman* (*madātmaka*) and admit that the two are one as inherently related like the soul to the body. The theory of body-soul relation (*śarīrātma bhāva*) between *jīva* and Brahman is fully supported by the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa.

The subsequent verses which describe the nature of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* support the meaning adopted by Rāmānuja for these two terms as body and soul respectively and not the cosmic matter (*prakṛti*) and the Supreme Lord, as Madhva interprets.

The Lord says:

> *tat kṣetram yac ca yādṛk ca yadvikāri yataśca yat*
> *sa ca yo yatprabhāvaśca tat samāsena me śṛṇu.* XIII.3
> Hear briefly from Me, what the field is, what its nature is, what its modifications are, whence it is (what purpose it serves acc. to R), what the knower of the field is and what its powers are.

According to Madhva, *yataśca yat* means "by which it (*kṣetra*) is impelled to act," *sa ca yo* means: "He who is the prime mover of all activity." By adopting this meaning he interprets *kṣetrajña* as God. But these words are also applicable to the *kṣetrajña* or the individual self, as both S and R explain. *Sa ca* means the self as the knower of the body (*sa ca kṣetrajñaḥ*), *yaḥ* means of what nature (*yatsvarūpaḥ*), *yatprabhāvaḥ ca* means what its powers are (*ye ca asya prabhāvaḥ.*[4])

The *Gītā* further states:

> *ṛṣibhir bahudhā gītaṁ chandobhir vividhaih pṛthak*
> *brahmasūtrapadaiścai'va hetumadbhir viniścitaiḥ.* XIII.4
> This has been sung by sages in many ways and distinctively in various hymns of the Veda; and also in well-reasoned and conclusive words of the *Brahmasūtras.*

In explaining this verse Rāmānuja quotes a few statements drawn from the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the Upaniṣads and also the relevant *Vedāntasūtras* which describe distinctively the nature of the body (*kṣetra*) and the individual self (*kṣetrajña*) and also their relation to *Paramātman.* The following statement of the *Mahābhārata* is worth taking note of:

> *indriyāṇi mano buddhiḥ satvam tejo balam dhṛtiḥ*
> *Vāsudevātmakāny āhuḥ kṣetraṁ kṣetrajña eva ca.*[5]
> They (the sages) state that the senses, *manas, buddhi,* vigour, splendour strength, courage, both *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* have Vāsudeva for their Self.

This verse supports Rāmānuja's view that *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* are both ensouled by *Paramātman.* In this verse *kṣetrajña* means the individual self and not the Supreme Being.

Regarding the nature of the *kṣetra,* the *Gītā* states that the body is the outcome of five gross elements viz., earth, water, fire, air and ether and other evolutes (*tattvas*) of *prakṛti* or the primordial cosmic matter viz., the *ahaṁkāra, buddhi* and *avyakta,* the eleven *indriyas* and the five objects of the senses (sound, touch, colour, taste, and odour) all belong to the body. Thus, it is stated:

mahābhūtany ahaṁkāro buddhir avyaktam eva ca
indriyāṇi daśai'kaṁ ca pañca ce indriyagocarāḥ. XIII.5

These constituents of the field (*kṣetra*) correspond to the twenty-four principles of the Sāṁkhya system. Both the material and mental principles are objective, according to Indian psychology and hence they are all regarded as the factors or principles constituting the *kṣetra* or body.

The mental traits such as desire (*icchā*), aversion (*dveṣa*), pleasure and pain are treated as belonging to the *kṣetra* since they arise on account of the association of the self with the body. These are considered as the modifications of the body.

icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṁghātaś cetanādhṛtiḥ
etat kṣetraṁ samāsena savikāram udāhṛtam. XIII.6
Desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, the aggregate (body and organs) which serve as the basis (*adhṛtiḥ*), this in brief is described as the body together with its modifications.

Śaṁkara reads the word *adhṛtiḥ* as *dhṛtiḥ* and means by it, fortitude. Madhva also takes it as *dhṛtiḥ*. Rāmānuja reads it as *ādhṛtiḥ* which means *ādhāra* or basis, which is more appropriate in the present context.

The *Gītā* enumerates several qualities or ethical virtues which arise as a result of the association of the self with the body. These are to be cultivated for developing self-knowledge (*ātmajñāna*). These are mentioned in vv.7-11.

amānitvam adambhitvam ahiṁsā kṣāntir ārjavam
ācāryopāsanaṁ śaucaṁ sthairyam ātmavinigrahaḥ. XIII.7
Humility, absence of ostentation, non-injury, patience, uprightness, adoration of the preceptor, purity, steadfastness and self-control.

indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam anahaṁkāra eva ca
janmamṛtyu jarāvyādhi duḥkhadoṣānudarśanam. XIII.8
Indifference to the objects of the sense, absence of egotism, the awareness of the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness, and pain.

asaktir anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu
nityam ca samacittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu. XIII.9

Non-attachment, absence of excessive clinging to son, wife, home and the like and a constant equal-mindedness to all desirable and undesirable happenings.

mayi cā' nanyayogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī
viviktadesasevītvam aratir janasaṁsadi. XIII.10
Unswerving devotion directed to Me (God) with whole-hearted discipline, resort to solitary places and dislike to a crowd of people.

adhyātma jñāna-nityatvaṁ tattvajñānārtha-darśanam
etaj jñānam iti proktam ajñānaṁ yad ato' nyathā. XIII.11
Constant contemplation on the knowledge pertaining to the self and insight into the knowledge of Reality. All this is said to be the knowledge (being the means of knowledge); what is contrary to it is *ajñāna.*

Lord Kṛṣṇa next proceeds to describe that which is to be known (*jñeyam*).

jñeyaṁ yat tat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñatvā amṛtam aśnute. XIII.12
I will describe that which is to be known, by knowing which one attains the immortality.

What does the word *jñeyaṁ* stand for? There is some difference of opinion among the commentators regarding this. The next seven verses (12-18) provide a description of *jñeyaṁ* and on the basis of it, Śaṁkara takes the term to imply *Para* Brahman or the Supreme Being. As will be seen presently, the words used to describe it are applicable to Brahman. According to Madhva, the term *jñeyaṁ* stands for *kṣetrajña* referred to in the opening verse which is *Paramātman* since it is described in the earlier verse (XIII.3) as "*sa ca yat prabhāvaśca.*" Rāmānuja, on the contrary, takes the term *jñeyaṁ* as the individual self (*jīvātman*) designated as *kṣetrajña* in the opening verse. This view is justified since this *adhyāya* is primarily concerned with the discussion of the nature of the body (*kṣetra*) and the individual self (*kṣetrajña*) and not about *Īśvara.* As will be seen presently, the description of *jñeyaṁ* in the vv.12-17 also supports it.

The following is the description of the *jñeyaṁ*:

anādimatparamabrahma na sat tan na asad ucyate. XIII.12
It means acc. to S, 'It is *paramabrahma* which is without a beginning (*anādimat*) and which is said to be neither existent

nor non-existent. It is neither *sat* nor *asat* since it is not an object of knowledge but to be conceived by negation of all attributes.'

Madhva also interprets the verse in favour of Brahman. The word *anādimat* is understood as a Being devoid of body, organs, qualities or activities which all have a beginning.[6] *Na sat na asat* implies that it is other than *mūrta* and *amūrta* forms (*murtāmūrta vyatītatvāt na sannaivasaducyate*).

In the context of the teaching about the nature of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* or body and soul, it may not be appropriate to bring in the concept of Brahman. Rāmānuja, therefore, takes the word *brahma* to mean *jīvātman*, which is regarded as *kṣetrajña*. If *jñeya* in the verse refers to *pratyagātmā-svarūpa* or nature of the individual self, its description in the verse should also conform to it.

The compound word *anādimatparamabrahma* is therefore read by Rāmānuja as *anādi matparama brahma*. Grammatically *anādimat* as one word is defective.The affix *mat* is not therefore to be added to *anādi*. *Anādi* as a separate word means that which has no beginning. *Matparama* means having Me as the Supreme Lord (*aham paro yasya tad matparama*). *Brahma* means *jīvātmā*. This interpretation is contextually justified. Besides, it is in conformity with the earlier teaching of the *Gītā* stating that *jīva* is the *parā prakṛti* of *Paramātman* (*itastu anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām jīvabhūtāṁ*). The word *brahma* also means *jīva*. According to the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa, *jīva* is regarded as the *śarīra* or the body of *Īśvara* in the sense that it is sustained and controlled by Him.

As regards the description that it is neither *sat* nor *asat*, the terms *sat* and *asat* are often used in the Upaniṣads to denote Brahman. When Brahman is associated with the unmanifest universe prior to the state of creation, it is called *asat*. Thus says the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*: *asadvā idamagra āsīt*. The same Brahman, prior to the state of creation is also called *sat* (*sadeva idamagra āsīt*). Since the *jīva* in its true form is devoid of such states, it is said that it is neither *sat* nor *asat*.

The next verse reads:

sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ tat sarvatokṣi śiromukham
sarvataḥ śrutimāl loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati. XIII.13

With its hand and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and faces on all sides, with ears on all sides, it exists encompassing all things in the universe.

This description no doubt fits well with the interpretation of Śaṁkara and Madhva in favour of *Paramātman*. According to Śaṁkara, this refers to *kṣetrajña* or the knower who is the Brahman as conditioned by limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*) caused by *avidyā*. But Rāmānuja in conformity with the meaning adopted for *kṣetrajña* as individual self, interprets the present verse in favour of *jīva* in its liberated state(*muktātma*) which according to the Upaniṣad, is capable of performing the task of hands and feet through its *saṁkalpa* in the state of *mukti*, as stated in the *Vedāntasūtra*[7] based on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which mentions the activities of *jīva* in the state of *mukti* (*pratyagātmā api pariśuddhasya . . . sarvataḥ pāṇi-pādādikārya kartṛtvam śruti-siddham eva*).

In a similar strain, the *Gītā* describes the *jñeya* or the principle to be known in paradoxical terms: Thus it says: "It has the qualities of all the senses and yet it is without senses, unattached and yet supporting all, devoid of *guṇas* and yet enjoying them. It is without and within all beings, it is unmoving and yet moving. It is too subtle to be known. It is far away and yet it is near. It is undivided and yet remains as if divided among beings." (XIII.14-16).

As these statements can be interpreted in favour of *Paramātman*, as Śaṁkara explains on the basis of the theory of two forms of Brahman—one as absolutely undifferentiated Being and the same Brahman as conditioned by *upādhis*. All the attributes are superimposed on Brahman due to *ajñāna*. For Madhva who does not accept the theory of two Brahmans and the theory of *adhyāropa*, all these array of contradictory qualities can exist in *Paramātman* who is *guṇapūrṇa* and free from defilements. Rāmānuja interprets these verses in favour of *jīvātman* or *kṣetrajña* consistent with the main subject-matter of this *adhyāya*, as evidenced in the opening verses. The subsequent verse (XIII.18) which sums up the teachings about the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* also substantiates it. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *iti kṣetraṁ tathā jñānaṁ jñeyam co' ktaṁ samāsataḥ*;
> Thus the field (*kṣetraṁ*), also knowledge of the self, the object of knowledge (*jñeyaṁ*) have been briefly described.

The implication of this verse, as explained by Rāmānuja, is that the nature of the field and its modifications are covered in vv. 5-6. *Jñāna* or the means of acquiring the knowledge of *ātman* through the cultivation of virtues is dealt in vv. 7-11. The vv. 12-17 speak of the *jñeyaṁ*, which according to the description provided in them are applicable to *kṣetrajña* or the knower of the field (*jīvātman*). In view of these facts, the word *jñeyaṁ* does not denote God, as interpreted by Śaṁkara and Madhva.

After stating the nature of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*, Lord refers to the *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. The *prakṛti* here denotes the primordial cosmic matter and *puruṣa*, the individual self, both of which are described in an earlier *adhyāya* as two forms of *Paramātman* known as *aparā prakṛti* and *parā prakṛti* respectively (VII.4-5). These two terms correspond to *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*. The purpose of mentioning *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* in the present context is to explain how the physical activities and mental experiences of an individual take place as a result of the association of the soul with a physical body. Only an embodied soul can function as an agent of action (*kartā*) and also experience *sukha* and *duḥkha* (*bhoktā*). These points are conveyed in the following verses (XIII.19-23):

> *prakṛtim puruṣam cai'va viddhy anādi ubhāu api*
> *vikārāṁś ca guṇāṁś cai'va viddhi prakṛti-sambhavān.* XIII.19
> Know that both *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* (self) are beginningless. Know that all modifications as also the qualities are born of *prakṛti*.

The reason for regarding both *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* as *anādi* is to emphasize the fact that the association of the soul with the body, which is bondage (*saṁsāra*) has no beginning but it has an end, when the soul is liberated from it. The *vikāra* or modifications refer to the mental states such as desire, happiness, sorrow and attachment which are born of *prakṛti* in the sense that these arise as a result of the soul's association with the body. In a specific way Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

> *kārya karaṇa-kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate*
> *puruṣaḥ sukha-duḥkhānāṁ bhoktṛtve hetur ucyate.* XIII.20
> The *prakṛti* is said to be the cause of agency to the body (*kārya*) and sense organs (*karaṇa*). The self is said to be the cause of experiencing pleasure and pain.

Kārya means the body and *karaṇa* means the eleven sense organs including mind. The *prakṛti* (the body) is considered to be the cause of the *jīva*'s functioning as the agent of action (*kartṛtva*) only when it is controlled by the self (*puruṣādhiṣṭhita*). The *puruṣa* or self as associated with the body (*prakṛti saṁsṛṣṭaḥ puruṣaḥ*) is the cause of the experience in the form of pleasure and pain. This is made explicit in the subsequent verse which reads:

> *puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān.* XIII.21
> The self seated in the *prakṛti* (the body) experiences the *guṇas* born of *prakṛti.*

The *guṇas* refer to the happiness, pain, etc., which are the effects of the *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.*

The cause of the association of the self with the *prakṛti,* according to the *Gītā,* is the attachment of the individual to the *guṇas* which are responsible for good and bad lives. Thus it is stated:

> *kāraṇaṁ guṇasaṅgosya sadasad yoni janmasu.* XIII.21
> Attachment to the *guṇas* is the cause of birth in the good and evil wombs.

The souls abiding in different kinds of bodies of living beings become attached to the happiness, pain, etc., resulting from the qualities—*sattva, rajas* and *tamas* associated with the respective bodies. Hence the soul performs the virtuous and sinful deeds constituting the means of happiness and suffering. In order to experience the fruits of the good and evil deeds, it is born again in good and evil wombs. This accounts for the transmigration of the soul through several births and deaths in accordance with the good or bad deeds performed in earlier lives. With the realization of the true nature of the self by cultivating the virtues which are conducive to the knowledge of the self, the soul becomes liberated.

In this connection, the nature of the *jīva* in relation to the body is brought out in a specific way:

> *upadraṣṭā' numantā ca bhartā-bhoktā maheśvaraḥ*
> *paramātme' ti cā'py ukto dehe'smin puruṣaḥ paraḥ.* XIII.22
> The self in the body is called spectator (witness), the approver, the supporter, the experiencer, the Great Lord and also the Supreme Self.

The terms used to describe it such as *bhartā, maheśvaraḥ, Paramātmā,* etc., convey the idea of *Paramātman.* In fact both Śaṁkara and Madhva construe the verse in favour of *Paramātman.* This explanation is sustainable for Śaṁkara since according to him, the knower of the field (*jīva*) is not different from the Supreme Lord (*kṣetrajñeśvaryoḥ bheda anabhyupagamāt gītā śāstre*). But this is not so for Madhva. *Jīva* is different from *Īśvara.* Nevertheless, Madhva regards the *kṣetrajña* mentioned in this *adhyāya* as no other being than *Paramātman* (*kṣetrajño bhagavān Viṣṇur na hyanyaḥ kṣetramañjasā*).[8] But as we have already observed, the *Gītā* does not say that *kṣetrajña* is *Paramātman.* It denotes only *jīvātman* which is different from *Paramātman.* Rāmānuja therefore interprets the present verse in favour *jīvātman* which abides in the body as *paraḥ-puruṣaḥ* or the highest self (highest as compared to the body and mind). It is described as *upadraṣṭā* and *anumanta* since it prompts the body as it pleases and approves of its actions. As it supports it and enjoys the pleasure and pain, it is regarded as *bhartā* and *bhoktā.* It is regarded as *Maheśvara* and *Paramātmā,* in the sense that it possesses the capacity to control and rule the body and mind.

That the subject matter of this *adhyāya* is mainly concerned with the teaching of the distinctive nature of body (*kṣetra*) and soul (*kṣetrajña*) becomes evident from the following verse which speaks about the goal to be attained by the discriminatory knowledge.

> *ya evam vetti puruṣam prakṛtiṁ ca guṇaiḥ saha*
> *sarvathā vartamāno'pi na ca bhūyo abhijāyate.* XIII.23
> He who thus understands the self (*puruṣa*) and *prakṛti* with the *guṇas,* is not born again, in whatever state he may be placed (in whatever way he may live, according to S).

According to Śaṁkara, the knowledge of *puruṣa* is the realization that the *jīva* (individual soul) is the same as *Paramātman.* Such an explanation is advanced in order to justify the liberation from bondage which is due to the ignorance of the true nature of the self. This is based on the assumption that *kṣetrajña* is the same as *Īśvara* as conveyed by the statement "*kṣetrajñam cā'pi mām viddhi,*" as interpreted by Śaṁkara. But as we have observed earlier, this is not the case. According to the *Gītā, kṣetrajña* as the individual self is different from *Īśvara,* though it is ensouled by the latter. According to Madhva, *puruṣa* denotes both *jīva* and *Paramātman* (*puruṣam prakṛtiṁ ca iti jīveśvarau sahaiva ucyate*). In an earlier verse referring to *puruṣa* as *bhoktā, puruṣa* is taken as *jīvātman* only. It does not therefore seem appropriate to take *puruṣa* in the present verse as also *Īśvara.*

In conformity with the subject matter of the *adhyāya* as indicated in the opening verse and also the subsequent teachings, the present verse speaks of the discriminatory knowledge of *jīvātman* and body which is helpful to the realization of the self (*jīvātman*).

The subsequent verse which speaks of the three pathways—*dhyāna, jñāna* and *karma* by means of which *ātman* is visualized, confirms that that subject matter of this *adhyāya* is *jīvātman*. The relevant verse reads:

> *dhyānena ātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā; anye sāṁkhyena yogena karma-yogena cā' pare.* XIII.24
> By meditation some perceive the self in the self (body or mind); others by the path of knowledge and still others by the path of works. The word *ātmānam* which is the object of the vision is obviously *jīvātman*. The second word *ātmani* means the body or mind in which the self abides. The third word *ātmanā* means through mind. Madhva takes the word *ātmānam* as *Paramātman* but contextually it is more appropriate to interpret it as *jīvātman*.

The *Gītā* also points out that all beings in the universe, whether it is moving or unmoving, are born out of the union of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*. Thus says the Lord:

> *yāvat saṁjāyate kiṁcit sattvaṁ sthāvara jaṅgamam*
> *kṣetra-kṣetrajña saṁyogāt tad viddhi bharatarṣabha.* XIII.26
> Whatever being is born, moving or unmoving (stationary), know, O Arjuna, that it is sprung through the union of the field and the knower of the field.

In the context of the knowledge of the true nature of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* and the need for securing liberation from bondage, the term *kṣetra* should naturally denote the body and *kṣetrajña*, *jīvātman*, who is the knower of the field. While Śaṁkara admits it, he takes the *kṣetrajña* as the true Self which is essentially Brahman and that it is the pure subject, whereas *kṣetra* as body is the object. The subject and object being of different nature and mutually opposed, the combination or union of the two mentioned in the verse, is due to the superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of the character of the one on the other, similar to the superimposition of the silver on the shell. Though this explanation may be justified on the basis of the Advaita doctrine of *adhyāsa*, it is open to dispute whether such a doctrine is supported by the *Gītā*.

Madhva, on the contrary, takes the term *kṣetra* in the wider sense as *cetana prakṛti* (Goddess Śrī) which includes both *jīva* and matter, whereas *kṣetrajña* is the Supreme Lord who dwells in all the *kṣetras*. The Supreme Lord creates all beings through the media of *cetana* *prakṛti.* This may be justified on the basis of Madhva's theology but there is no mention of the concept of Śrī or Goddess in the *Gītā*. *Kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña,* according to the explanation provided in the opening verses of this *adhyāya*, refer only to the body and soul. The delusion of the body as the soul (*dehātma bhrama*) caused by *avidyā* or ignorance is the cause of bondage. It is only with the discriminating knowledge of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* that it is possible to overcome the *ajñāna* leading to the liberation of the soul from bondage. This is the explanation offered by Rāmānuja and contextually, it is justified.

This view also finds support in the subsequent verses (28-34) which deal with the contemplation of the distinctive character of the self as different from the body.

> *samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram*
> *vinaśyatsu avinaśyantam yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati.* XIII.27
> He who sees the Supreme Ruler (*jīvātman* acc. to R) dwelling alike (equally acc. to S), in all bodies and never perishing when they perish, he verily sees.

Another verse says:

> *samaṁ paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram*
> *na hinasty ātmanā' tmānaṁ tato yāti parām gatim.* XIII.28
> For, seeing the ruler (self) abiding alike in every place, he does not injure the self by the self (mind) and then he reaches the highest goal.

All these verses are construed by Śaṁkara in favour of the Supreme Lord (*Īśvara*) who is the same in all beings. Madhva also interprets them in favour of *Īśvara* who is the Supreme Ruler of both *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* (*jīvas*). The interpretation of Śaṁkara is not sustainable since the *Gītā* does not speak of the identity of the *jīva* and Brahman. As regards the view of Madhva, the terms *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* do not convey all the three ontological entities—*Īśvara, puruṣa* and *prakṛti.* The words *parameśvara* (in v. 27), *brahma* (in v. 30) can also mean *jīvātman* as we have explained earlier. Hence these verses are to be taken as referring to the *jīva.*

The concluding verse of the *adhyāya* also emphasizes the importance of the knowledge of the true nature of *kṣetra* as body and *kṣetrajña* as *jīvātman* for the purpose of attaining liberation. Thus, it is stated:

kṣetrakṣetrajñayor evam antaraṁ jñānacakṣuṣā
bhūta-prakṛti-mokṣaṁ ca ye vidur yānti te param. XIII.34

Those who thus discern with the eye of wisdom (discrimination) the difference between the field or the body (*kṣetra*) and the knower of the field or *jīva* (*kṣetrajña*) and the means of liberation from the *prakṛti*, they attain the Supreme.

The *para* means for Śaṁkara the Supreme Brahman,which is attained by the realization of the *jīva* as Brahman. But this theory of identity is not warranted by the *Gītā*. The view that *Paramātman* is attained, as Madhva interprets, does not also appear to be satisfactory since the mere knowledge of the true nature of the body and *jīvātman* does not directly lead to the attainment of *Paramātman* unless *kṣetrajña* or *jīvātman* is taken as *Īśvara*. Rāmānuja therefore interprets the term *parama* as *jīvātman*, which appears relevant in the context of the knowledge of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* as body and soul.

REFERENCES

1. See *BG*, II.12. See also ch. 2.
2. See *Bṛ. Up.*, III.7-15.
3. See *BG*, X.20. See also *BG*, XVIII-61, *Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛddeśe arjuna tiṣṭhati.*
4. See RB on *BG*, XIII.3.
5. *Mahābhārata* (hereinafter cited as *Mbh.*), Śāntiparva, 136 and 149.
6. See Jayatīrtha on MB. See also Raghavendratīrtha's *Gītārthasaṁgraha: adiḥ yeṣām astīti ādimanti dehendriyādīni; na vidyante ādimanti yasya tadanādimat.*
7. See *VS*, IV.4-8, *saṁkalpād eva tu tat śruteḥ*. See also *Ch. Up.*, VIII.2-1.
8. *Gītā-tātparya*, XIII.3.

CHAPTER 14

The Theory of Three *Guṇas*

The fourteenth *adhyāya* is generally named *Guṇatraya-vibhāga-yoga* or the theory of the differentiation of the three *guṇas*. It deals mainly with the exposition of the three *guṇas* or modes of *prakṛti* viz., *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, the manner in which they bind an individual and the means of overcoming their influence. This subject is closely related to the theory of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* discussed in the preceding chapter and its knowledge is considered useful to understand the nature of human bondage and the means for the redemption from them.

Considering its importance, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that it is the most important piece of knowledge which leads to the attainment of a higher state. Thus He says:

> *parama bhūya pravakṣyāmi jñānānāṁ jñānamuttamam*
> *yaj jñātva munayaḥ sarve paraṁ siddhim ito gataḥ.* XIV.1
> I shall again explain to you (another kind of) knowledge which is the best of all knowledge, by knowing which all sages have attained highest perfection from this sphere of bondage.

The Lord further extols this knowledge:

> *idaṁ jñānam upāśirtya mama sādharmyam āgatāḥ*
> *sarge'pi no pajāyante pralaye na vyathayanti ca.* XIV.2
> Having resorted to this knowledge and attaining a status similar to Mine, they are not born at the time of creation, nor do they suffer at the time of dissolution.

By way of extolling the knowledge of the *guṇas*, mention is made of the nature of the attainment in terms of *sādharmya*. What does *sādharmya* imply? Śaṁkara means by it the identity of the Supreme Being (*matsvarūpatā*), since according to him the *Gītā* does not advocate the knower of the field (*jīvātman*) as different from *Īśvara*. But as we have observed in the preceding chapter, *kṣetrajña* is not identical with *Īśvara*. The word *sādharmya* normally means similarity in respect of attributes (*samāna-dharmatā*). Rāmānuja therefore means by *sādharmya*, a status similar to that of *Īśvara* (*matsāmyam*).

Before stating the nature of the *guṇas*, which cause bondage, Lord Kṛṣṇa explains briefly the origin of the different species of living beings.

> *mama yonir mahad-brahma tasmin garbhaṁ dadhāmyaham*
> *saṁbhavaḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ tato bhavati bhārata.* XIV.3
> Great *brahma* (*prakṛti*) is my womb; in that I lay the germ (seed) and from that, O Arjuna, emanate all beings.
>
> *sarva yoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ saṁbhavanti yaḥ*
> *tāsāṁ brahma mahad-yonir aham bījapradaḥ pitā.* XIV.4
> Whatever forms (beings) are born, in any wombs (species of living beings), O Arjuna, of them *prakṛti* is the womb (the main source) and I am the father who sows the seed (unite the soul with the bodies).

According to these verses, *prakṛti*, the primordial cosmic matter is the source of all living beings. It is described as *mahad-brahma* because of its being great as compared to its other evolutes such as *mahat, ahaṁkāra*, etc. It is considered as the womb in the sense that it is the main cause or source of all the creatures. Śaṁkara equates *prakṛti* with the *māyā* of *Īśvara* and it is described as *aparā prakṛti* of the Lord. The sowing of the seed in it implies, acc. to S, giving birth to *hiraṇyagarbha* who is the cause of the birth of all beings by associating *kṣetrajña* with *kṣetra*.[1]

According to Rāmānuja also, *mahad-brahma* is the non-sentient *prakṛti* constituted of three qualities known as *aparā prakṛti* of *Īśvara*, as stated in the *Gītā* (VII.4-5). It is regarded as the womb (*garbha*) in the sense that it is the source of all living beings. The sowing of the seed in it implies that the mass of sentient souls (*cetana puñjarūpam garbham*) are caused to be associated with the non-sentient bodies (*acetana prakṛtyā bhoga kṣetra bhūtayā bhoktṛvarga puñjabhūtāṁ cetana prakṛtiṁ saṁyojayāmi ityarthaḥ*).

For Madhva also *mahad-brahma* means *prakṛti* but this is regarded as *cit-prakṛti* or *Śrītattva* comprising three distinctive forms viz., Śrī, Bhū and Durgā, presiding over three *guṇas* respectively. Śrī is the progenitress of the universe. *Mamayoni* means the womb in which the Lord deposits His seed (*garbhādānārthā yoniḥ*). This is the *cit-prakṛti* or Goddess Śrī through whom the Lord causes the creation of the universe and all living beings.

Regarding the nature of the *guṇas*, Lord Kṛṣṇa states:

> *sattvaṁ rajas tamas iti guṇāh prakṛti sambhavāḥ*
> *nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam.* XIV.5
> *Sattva, rajas* and *tamas* are born out of *prakṛti*. They bind the immutable dweller in the body (the self).

The *guṇas* denote the constituent attributes or strands of *prakṛti*. According to Śaṁkara, the *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* are the technical names of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. Being of the nature of ignorance, they bind the self. According to Rāmānuja, the *guṇas* are the essential characteristics of *prakṛti* and they are inherently related to it (*svarūpānubandhinaḥ svabhāva viśeṣāḥ*). They are ever present in *prakṛti* even in its causal state and they become apparent when *prakṛti* evolves itself into *mahat* and other evolutes including the five gross physical elements. They have to be known only through their effects. The *guṇas* bind the self when it is associated with the body.

Regarding the nature of the *sattva guṇa* and how it binds the self, the *Gītā* states:

> *tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatvāt prakāśakam anāmayam*
> *sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñānasaṅgena cā' nagha.* XIV.6
> Of these, *sattva*, being pure, illuminates and is free from morbidity (*anāmayam*). It binds, Arjuna, by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge.

Acc. to S, the binding of the self by *sattva* through attachment to happiness is to associate the self which is the pure subject with happiness which is a *dharma* of an object through non-discrimination between subject and object. Similarly, knowledge which is a *dharma* of *antaḥkaraṇa* is falsely attributed to the self due to *avidyā*.

The theory of *adhyāsa* as conceived by Śaṁkara is not mentioned in the *Gītā*. Rāmānuja therefore explains this verse differently. *Sattva* being luminous and free from morbidity, generates knowledge and happiness. These also cause attachment to happiness and knowledge. When attachment to happiness and knowledge is born, one engages in secular and Vedic means for securing them. Consequently, one is born in such bodies as constitute the means for realizing such fruits. In this manner *sattva* binds the self through attachment to happiness and knowledge.

Madhva does not offer any explanation on these verses (5-6) except the general statement that it describes the manner in which three *guṇas* forge the chain of bondage to enable the self to take resort to proper means for its eradication (*bandha prakāram darśayati sādhana anuṣṭanāya*).

Regarding the nature and function of *rajo guṇa*, the *Gītā* states:

> *rajo rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavam*
> *tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karma saṅgena dehinam.* XIV.7
>
> Know, O Arjuna, that *rajas* is of the nature of passion springing from thirst and attachment. It binds the embodied self with attachment to action.

Rāga or passion such as desire, arises from *tṛṣṇā* or craving for objects of pleasure and *saṅga* or attachment is the longing for union with such objects. These lead to the involvement in constant action. Whatever actions have been begun by the self from longing for sensual enjoyments, they become the cause of births in bodies that constitute the means for experiencing such enjoyments.

As regards the nature of *tamas* and its function, it is stated:

> *tamas tv ajñānajam viddhi mohanam sarvadehinām*
> *pramādālasya-nidrābhis tan nibadhnāti bhārata.* XIV.8
>
> Know that *tamas* is born of ignorance (false knowledge acc. to R) and deludes all embodied beings. It binds, O Arjuna, by developing the qualities of negligence, indolence and sleep.

Ajñāna is taken by Śaṁkara as ignorance. Acc. to R, it is erroneous knowledge, that is, what is other than true knowledge (*viparyaya jñāna*). *Tamas* being the cause of negligence, indolence and sleep, binds the embodied self through them.

The main functions of the three *guṇas*, as stated in the *Gītā* (v. 9) are: *sattva* generates attachment to happiness (*sukha*) and *rajas* to action (*karma*), whereas *tamas*, by veiling knowledge, generates attachment to negligence (*pramāda*).

The *Gītā* further points out that though all the three *guṇas* are always present in the self associated with *prakṛti* in the form of body, only one or the other *guṇa* predominates.

> *rajas tamaś ca abhibhūya sattvaṁ bhavati bhārata*
> *rajaḥ sattvaṁ tamaścaiva tamaḥ sattvam rajas tathā.* XIV.10

> *Sattva* prevails, overpowering *rajas* and *tamas. Rajas* preponderates by prevailing over *sattva* and *tamas. Tamas* preponderates by prevailing over *rajas* and *sattva.*

The *Gītā* also explains how one can infer the predominance of a quality in an individual. When the light of knowledge shines revealing the true nature of objects through the sense organs, one should know that *sattva* is predominant (*sattvam vivṛddham*). When *rajas* is predominant, greed, activity, undertaking of work, unrest and longing arise. When *tamas* predominates, ignorance (*aprakāśa*), inactivity, negligence of duty, delusion arise.

The *Gītā* points out the consequences of the predominance of the particular *guṇa* at the time of death. If *sattva* predominates in a person at the time of death, he will be reborn in the families of those who have the knowledge of the self (this is acc. to R). Acc. to S, he attains the taintless realms of those who know the highest.

When one dies during the predominance of *rajas*, he is born among those who are attached to the deeds for the sake of fruits. Similarly, one who dies during the predominance of *tamas* is born in the wombs of the deluded (*mūḍhayoni*) or living beings lacking intelligence (acc. to R). In such a birth he will be incapable of realising any human end.

The *Gītā* also describes the leading effects of these *guṇas.*

> *sattvāt saṁjayāte jñānam rajaso lobha eva ca*
> *pramādamohau tamaso bhavato ajñānam eva ca.* XIV.17
> From the *sattva* arises knowledge and from *rajas* greed and from *tamas* arises both negligence and delusion as well as ignorance.

Further in terms of the kind of life attained by the persons possessing these *guṇas,* the *Gītā* says:

> *ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti satvasthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasaḥ*
> *jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthā adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ.* XIV.18
> Those who are established in *sattva* rise upwards. Those who are influenced by *rajas* remain in the middle. And those who are steeped in *tamas* go downwards.

The word *ūrdhva* means for Śaṁkara, the higher realms of the deities (*devalokādi*). According to R, going upwards implies that these persons attain *mokṣa,* or liberation from bondage gradually. The *madhya* or the middle means the earthly life of human beings.

The *adhaḥ* represents the lower forms of life such as animals, insects, creepers, etc.

After stating the effects of the influence of the *guṇas*, Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches the way of overcoming their sway on an individual for the purpose of attaining the higher state. The relevant verse reads:

> *na'nyaṁ guṇebhyaḥ kartāram yadā draṣṭā anupaśyati*
> *guṇebhyaśca parama vetti madbhāvam so' dhigacchati.* XIV.19
> When the seer sees no other agent of action than the *guṇas* and knows also that which transcends the *guṇas* (the self, acc. to R), he attains My nature (*madbhāva*).

The implication of this verse is explained differently by the commentators. According to Śaṁkara, the *draṣṭā* or the seer is the true self, that is, the pure subject devoid of *kartṛtva.* Due to its association with the body, it experiences happiness or sorrow due to ignorance. With the realization of the true nature of the self as identical with Brahman, liberation takes place. The present verse points out that there is no other agent of action (*kartāra*) other than the *guṇas* and when the seer realizes it as different from the *guṇas,* it attains the nature of *Paramātman* in the sense that it is the very Brahman. This is the significance of *madbhāva,* according to Śaṁkara.

According to Madhva, this verse implies that the *guṇas* themselves act as the modifying causes of their effects (*pariṇāmikartā*). When the knower (*draṣṭā*) realizes this fact and visualizes the Supreme Lord as their independent controller above the *guṇas* (*guṇebhyaḥ ca parama vetti*), he attains the status of *Paramātman* in the sense of sharing the bliss.

Śaṁkara's explanation is based on the assumption that *draṣṭā* or the *jīva* is non-different from Brahman and that it is pure subject (*sākṣī*) devoid of *kartṛtva.* This assumption is not tenable since according to the Upaniṣads, the *Vedāntasūtra* and also the *Gītā, jīva* and *Paramātman* are distinct and *jīva* is also *kartā.* As regards Madhva's explanation, though *jīva* and *Īśvara* are admitted to be different, it does not accept *kartṛtva* for the *jīva* in the primary sense of the term.

Rāmānuja offers an explanation which conforms to the view expressed in the *Vedāntasūtra* and also the *Gītā. Draṣṭā* in the verse is *jīvātman.* When the *jīva,* in its true nature is not associated with the physical body, it is devoid of *kartṛtva* caused by *karma.* But when it is associated with the body, it becomes the agent of action (*kartā*) by contact with the *guṇas* springing from past *karmas.* When one perceives the self in this way, namely that in its true nature, it is not the agent of action and the *guṇas* are responsible for action, then it attains a status similar to that of *Paramātman.* The word *para* means, acc. to R, that *ātman* as *akartā* is different from *guṇas.*

The subsequent verse explains the nature of the higher status attained by *jīva,* as implied in the expression "*madbhāvam adhi gacchati*".

guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī deha samudbhavān
janma mṛtyu jarā duḥkhair vimukto amṛtam aśnute. XIV.20

When embodied self transcends these three *guṇas* which arise from the body, it is freed from birth, death, old age and pain and attains immortality.

According to S, the *dehī* or the embodied one who is enlightened with spiritual knowledge and who has overcome the influence of the *guṇas* which are the *upādhis* or the limiting adjuncts caused by *māyā,* becomes in this very life free from birth, death, etc., and experiences immortality.

According to R, the embodied self, by transcending the *guṇas* which spring from *prakṛti* transformed into the form of the body, beholds the self as different from the *guṇas* and as of the nature of knowledge only. It then experiences the immortal self (*ātmānaṁ anubhavati*). This is the significance of the teaching *madbhāvaṁ adhigacchati.*

In response to the query made by Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa describes the marks (*liṅga*) or the characteristics of the person who has transcended the three *guṇas* and also his behaviour as follows (verses 22-25).

prakāśaṁ ca pravṛttiṁ ca moham eva ca pāṇḍava
na dveṣṭi saṁpravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati. XIV.22

He neither dislikes, O Arjuna, illumination, activity and delusion when they arise nor longs for them when they cease.

The illumination (knowledge), activity and delusion are the effects of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* respectively. As explained by Rāmānuja, when they arise in regard to undesired objects other than the self, the person who has transcended *guṇas* does not hate them. Similarly, when desired things other than the self become unavailable, he does not long for them.

udāsīnavad āsīno guṇair yo na vicālyate
guṇā vartanta ity eva yo avatiṣṭhati ne'ṅgate. XIV.23
He who is seated like one unconcerned, unperturbed by the *guṇas*, who stays silent thinking that the *guṇas* are at work and does not get involved with the effects of the *guṇas*.

sama duḥkha-sukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ
tulya priyāpriyo dhīras tulya nindātma-saṁstutiḥ. XIV.24
He who regards pain and pleasure alike, who dwells in his self, who looks upon a clod, a stone, a piece of gold as of equal worth, who remains the same towards things dear and hateful (pleasant and unpleasant), who is wise (*dhīraḥ*), capable of discriminating between self and the body (*prakṛtyātma viveka kuśalaḥ*), who regards both blame and praise as equal.

mānāpamanayos tulyas tulyo mitrāri pakṣayoḥ
sarvārambhaparityāgī guṇātitaḥ sa ucyate. XIV.25
He who is the same in honour and dishonour and the same to friends and foes, and who has abandoned all undertaking (for the sake of body), he is said to have transcended the *guṇas*.

As regards the method or means to be adopted to accomplish the transcendence of the *guṇas*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

māṁ ca yo avyabhicāreṇa bhakti-yogena sevate
sa gunān samatītyai'tān brahmabhūyāya kalpate. XIV.26
He who serves Me with unswerving loving meditation (*bhakti-yoga*) crosses the *guṇas* and becomes fit for the state of Brahman.

This verse explicitly states that *bhaktiyoga* is the means to transcend the influence of the *guṇas* and thereby attain a higher state.

Commenting on this verse, Śaṁkara also acknowledges that an individual, whether he be an ascetic (*yati*), or a man of action (*karmī*), who serves Lord Nārāyaṇa residing in the hearts of all beings through the unswerving *bhakti-yoga*, transcends the *guṇas*. *Bhakti* is loving devotion to God and that itself becomes the *yoga* or the means to get united with *Paramātman* through His grace (*bhajanam bhaktiḥ saiva yogaḥ, tena viveka vijñānātmāka yogena bhakti-yogena, sa hi bhakti yogaḥ*).

Rāmānuja also emphasizes that loving meditation on *Paramātman* is essential for transcending the *guṇas* since mere awareness or reflection over the difference between *guṇas* and *jīvātman* is not adequate for this purpose.

Regarding the nature of the attainment described as *brahma-bhūya*, there is some difference of opinion among the commentators.

Śaṁkara takes the term *brahma-bhūya* as *brahma-bhāvana* (*bhuya* meaning as *bhāvana*), that is, to become Brahman, which is *mokṣa.*

Madhva interprets the word *brahma-bhūya* as becoming beloved of the Supreme Lord like the *cit-prakṛti* (Goddess Śrī), the word *bhuya* being understood as becoming (*bhāvāya*). This verse therefore means (acc. to M), "One who worships Me with unswerving devotion overcomes the *guṇas* and becomes fit to attain the status of becoming dear to Me."

According to Rāmānuja, *brahma-bhūya* means the state of Brahman (*brahmatvāya*), that is, a person who transcends the *guṇas* becomes qualified for the state of Brahman. The word *brahma* in the present context is interpreted as the individual self (*jīvātman*). The verse therefore means, acc. to R, "He who worships *Paramātman* with unswerving meditation transcends the *guṇas* and becomes fit to realize the true nature of *jīvātman* as immortal and immutable (*yathāvasthitam ātmānam amṛtam avyayam prāpnoti ityarthaḥ*).

In the context of the influence of the three *guṇas* on the embodied self, the interpretation of Rāmānuja in favour of *jīvātmā-sākṣātkāra* is more appropriate than that of S and M. Besides, the following concluding verse also lends support to it.

> *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhā'ham amṛtasya avyayasya ca*
> *śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyai'kāntikasya ca.* XIV.27
> For I am the ground (abode) of Brahman, the immortal and the imperishable, of eternal *dharma* and of perfect bliss.

The statement *brahmaṇaḥ ahaṁ pratiṣṭhā* or "I am the abode of Brahman" implies that "I" as Lord Kṛṣṇa or *Paramātman* is the abode of Brahman. Obviously these two "I" and "Brahman" have to be two distinct entities, one serving as the abode (*pratiṣṭhā*) for the second, since Brahman itself cannot be abode for Brahman. Śaṁkara resolves this difficulty by maintaining two concepts or forms of Brahman as *savikalpaka* and *nirvikalpaka. Aham* refers to the higher Brahman which is devoid of all differentiation (*nirvikalpaka*) which in the present verse is equated with Lord Kṛṣṇa. The other term Brahman refers to the *savikalpaka* Brahman. The *nirvikalpaka* Brahman which is immortal (*amṛta*), imperishable (*avyaya*) and bliss (*sukha*) is the abode of *savikalpaka* Brahman.

Madhva, who does not admit two forms of Brahman, interprets the word "Brahman" as *cit-prakṛti* or Goddess Lakṣmī for whom *Paramātman* (Lord Kṛṣṇa) is the ground.

Śaṁkara's explanation would be justifiable if the theory of two forms of Brahman is admitted. But it is not explicitly mentioned in the *Gītā*. As regards Madhva's interpretation, the *Gītā* does not refer to the theory of *prakṛti* as Goddess Lakṣmī and in the absence of it, the interpretation of Madhva cannot be justified.

The only plausible explanation of the statement "I am the ground of Brahman" is, as Rāmānuja maintains, that Brahman is to be taken as *jīvātman* for which *Paramātman* is the ground (*pratiṣṭhā*). The word *brahma* also bears the meaning of *jīvātman.*

The preceding verse speaks of the attainment of the state of the realization of the true nature of the self by one who has transcended the *guṇas* and the present verse provides the justification for taking this view, as implied by the word *hi* in the verse *hi śabdo hetau.*

Thus, it may be observed from the foregoing analysis, the present *adhyāya* dealing with the theory of three *guṇas* of *prakṛti* is of great importance as it throws light on the subject of human bondage due to the influence of *guṇas* and the method of overcoming it.

REFERENCE

1. See ŚB on *BG*, XIV.4, *tasmin mahati brahmaṇi yonau garbham hiraṇyagarbha janmanā bījam sarvabhūta janmakāraṇam bījam dadhāmi nikṣipāmi. . . . Īśvaraḥ ahaṁ . . . kṣetrajñaṁ kṣetreṇa saṁyojayāmi.*

CHAPTER 15

The Theory of *Puruṣottama*

THE fifteenth *adhyāya* which is named *Puruṣottama-yoga* presents a clearer exposition of the nature of the Supreme Being who is designated as *Puruṣottama.* Though this subject is covered in the earlier *adhyāyas* (VII, IX, X, and XI) with particular reference to the nature and glory of *Paramātman,* the present *adhyāya* brings out the specific nature of the Ultimate Reality as the *Paramātman* or the Supreme Person. While all the commentators are agreed upon the central theme of the *adhyāya,* they differ in their views regarding the implication of the concept of *Puruṣottama.* The issue involved is whether the *Puruṣottama,* referred to in this *adhyāya* as distinct from *kṣara* and *akṣara puruṣa,* is the *Para* Brahman, as conceived by Śaṁkara or whether it is the personal Supreme God, as maintained by Rāmānuja and Madhva. This issue is of special importance for Vedānta and it needs careful examination.

At the outset Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches the nature of bondage (*saṁsāra*) with which the *jīva* is bound by citing the analogy of the *aśvattha* tree, with a view to creating a desire for the devotees to strive for liberation from bondage by means of the knowledge of the Supreme Being. The *aśvattha* tree, which symbolizes the bondage of *jīva,* is described as follows:

> *ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham aśvatthaṁ prāhur avyayam*
> *chandāṁsi yasya parṇāni yas taṁ veda sa vedavit.* XV.1
> They (the Vedas) speak of the imperishable peepal tree (*aśvattha*) as having its roots above and branches below. Its leaves are the Vedas. He who knows this is the knower of the Vedas.

A similar description of the *aśvattha* tree is also offered by the *Kaṭhopaniṣad.*[1] The tree with roots above signify that the bondage in the form of cosmic process of births and deaths has its origin in Brahmā (*caturmukha brahmā*) acc. to R, God acc. to M and Brahman associated with *māyā,* acc. to S) who is above the universe. The spread of the branches downwards implies the variety of living beings in the universe. It is regarded as *avyaya* or imperishable in the sense that it is a continuous process like the flow of the river. But it can be arrested only by the dawn of knowledge.

The *Gītā* further states:

> *adhaś co'rdhvaṁ prasṛtās tasya śākhā guṇapravṛddhā viṣayapravālāḥ; adhaśca mūlāny anusaṁtatāni karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke.* XV.2
> Its branches extend below and above, nourished by the *guṇas*, with the sense objects for its twigs; its secondary roots extend downwards resulting in actions which cause bondage in the world of men.

Acc. to S, the roots spreading downwards are the *vāsanās*, which the souls carry as a result of past deeds. In accordance with one's past deeds the souls take birth in the higher realms as Devas, Gandharvas, etc., and also in the lower realms as men, beasts, etc. The effect of actions done in the human state bring about further conditions of men down below and of divinities etc., up above.

The *Gītā* also points out that its real form is not perceived here by the souls immersed in *saṁsāra* nor its end nor its beginning, nor its basis. This firm-rooted cosmic tree is to be cut off by the strong axe of detachment viz., the detachment from the sense objects composed of the *guṇas* through the means of right knowledge.

Lord Kṛṣṇa instructs how one is to escape from this bondage:

> *tataḥ padaṁ tat parimārgitavyaṁ yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ tam eva cā'dyaṁ puruṣaṁ prapadyet yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇi.* XV.4
> Then, one should seek that goal by attaining which one does not return to this world. One should take refuge only in that Primal Person from whom has come forth this ancient cosmic process.

This verse emphasizes the need to seek refuge in the Supreme Being who is the goal to be attained since the grace of God is required to overcome this bondage with which the soul is entangled from a beginningless time. The statement "*yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā*" is interpreted by Śaṁkara to imply that the bondage is an illusory manifestation of the Supreme Person similar to the magical projection. But if we take into consideration the teachings contained in the verses of earlier *adhyāyas* (X.8 and 10) in which it is stated that the Lord is the origin of all and from Him proceed everything, there would be no justification to speak of the universe and also the bondage of the soul as illusory manifestation of the Supreme Being.

Regarding the nature of the goal to be attained, the *Gītā* says:

> *na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śaśaṅko na pāvakaḥ*
> *yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama.* XV.6
> The sun does not illuminate that, nor the moon nor the fire. That is My Supreme Light (Supreme Abode, acc. to S and M) from which those who reach it never return is Mine.

According to Śaṁkara, the *paramaṁ dhāma* described in the verse refers to the Abode of Viṣṇu. Madhva takes it as the *svarūpa* of *Paramātman*. But Rāmānuja interprets it as the Supreme Light (*paramaṁ jyotiḥ*), which in the present context refers to the *jīvātman* in its true nature as constituted of infinite knowledge. This interpretation is justified since it is stated in the verse that neither the sun nor the moon, nor even the fire can illuminate that light of the self. Besides, the subsequent verse mentions that *jīvas* are the integral part of *Paramātman*. If *dhāma* is taken to mean the Abode or *svarūpa* of *Paramātman*, as Śaṁkara and Madhva interpret, it is not appropriate to speak of *jīva* as the *aṁśa* of *Paramātman* as mentioned in the subsequent verse.

Thus it is stated in the subsequent verse:

> *mamaivāṁśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*
> *manaḥ ṣaṣṭhāni indriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati.* XV.7
> An everlasting (eternal) part of Myself, having become the bound (living) self in the world of life, draws to itself (attracts) the senses of which the mind is the sixth and which abide in the *prakṛti* (the body).

This is an important verse which speaks of the nature of the *jīvātman* in relation to the *Paramātman* in terms of *aṁśa*. The *Vedāntasūtra* also states that *jīva* is an *aṁśa* of Brahman.[2] In what sense *jīva* is *aṁśa*? If Brahman is *niravyaya* or partless, how can *jīva* be its *aṁśa* or part? Hence Śaṁkara interprets that *Paramātman* is imagined as if it were a part (*aṁśatvena kalpitaḥ*). It is part of the Supreme in the same way as the space in an earthen jar is a part of the universal space. In other words, *jīva* is the Supreme Self conditioned by the limiting adjunct such as *antaḥkaraṇa*. It is the conditioned self that functions through the senses and mind.

According to Madhva, *jīva* as *aṁśa* means that it is *pratibimba* of *Paramātman* in the sense that it is similar to the latter in respect of certain qualities, while at the same time depending on Him. By implication this verse signifies that the Supreme Lord is the *bimba* of all the souls.

For Rāmānuja, *aṁśa* means an integral part of the *Paramātman* in the same way the luminosity of the sun is an integral part of the sun. Though *jīva* constitutes a distinct real entity and an eternal part of *Paramātman,* it becomes the bound self. While it is in bondage, it functions through the senses and the mind. When the same is liberated from bondage, it remains in its own true nature similar to that of *Paramātman.*

This explanation of Rāmānuja appears appropriate in the context of the subsequent verses (8-10) which describe the manner in which the *jīva* in bondage functions. Thus says the *Gītā*:

> *śarīram yad avāpnoti yac cā' py utkrāmatīśvaraḥ*
> *gṛhītvai'tāni saṁyāti vāyur gandhān ivā' śayāt.* XV.8
> Whatever body the lord of the senses (*jīva*) acquires and from whatever body it departs, it takes these (senses and mind) and goes even as the wind carries perfumes from their receptacles.

The word *Īśvara* or lord in this verse refers to the *jīva* since it is the lord of the senses and mind. When it departs from a body, it moves elsewhere along with the subtle body consisting of subtle senses, mind and five subtle elements known as *bhūta-sūkṣma,* as stated in the *Vedāntasūtra.*

The *jīva* experiences the objects of senses using the five sense organs viz., the ear, the eyes, the sense of touch, the tongue and the nose and also the mind (*manas*). The *Gītā* further points out that the persons who have the misconception of the body as the self do not see the indwelling self in its true form, when the *jīva* departs from the body or when it stays in the body or when it experiences the objects through the senses. Only those who have the eye of wisdom see it.

After explaining how the individual self in its true nature as Supreme Light is an eternal part of the Divine Glory (*vibhūti*), Lord Kṛṣṇa states that even the luminaries such as the sun, moon, fire etc., and also other elements are aspects of *Paramātman.* Thus He says:

yad ādityagatam tejo jagad bhāsayate akhilam
yac candramasi yac cā'gnau tat tejo viddhi mamākam. XV.12
That brilliance of the sun which illuminates the whole universe, that which is in the moon, that which is in the fire, know that as Mine.

gām āviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmy aham ojasā
puṣnāmi ca auṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtva rasātmakaḥ. XV.13
And entering the earth, I support all beings by My vital energy, and becoming the sapful *soma,* I nourish all herbs.

ahaṁ vaiśvānaro bhūtva prāṇinām deham āśritaḥ
prāṇāpānasamāyuktaḥ pacāmy annaṁ caturvidham. XV.14
Becoming the digestive fire and abiding in the bodies of living creatures, I digest the four kinds of food in association with the inward and outward breath (*prāṇa and apāna*).

The Lord further says:

sarvasya cā'haṁ hṛdi saṁniviṣṭo mattaḥ smṛtiḥ jñānam apohanaṁ ca
vedaiśca sarvair aham eva vedyo vedāntakṛd vedavid eva cā'ham.
XV.15
And I am seated in the hearts of all; from Me spring memory and knowledge as well as their loss; indeed I alone am to be known by all the Vedas. I indeed am the author of the Vedānta (acc. to S and M) or I bring about the fruition of the rituals enjoined in the Vedas (acc. to R). I am also the knower of the Vedas.

This verse, which emphasizes the immanence of *Paramātman* in all beings as the Inner Controller, as declared in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* provides the justification for the equation of the Supreme Lord with the *tejas* of sun, moon, etc., as well as the digestive fire. As the Inner Controller, all the mental functions of an individual such as knowledge, memory, etc., are caused by *Paramātman* through His *saṁkalpa.* As explained by Śaṁkara, the knowledge and memory of the beings come from *Paramātman* in accordance with the good deeds. Similarly, the loss, deterioration of memory and knowledge of those who perform evil deeds, come from Him in accordance with evil deeds. *Paramātman* is Vedāntakṛt in the sense that He is the originator of Vedānta (acc. to S and M). According to Rāmānuja, Vedānta means the fruition of the Vedas, that is, the fruit to be attained by the Vedic injunctions to perform Vedic rituals and *antakṛt* means one who bestows the fruits. *Paramātman* is Vedāntakṛt as the bestower of fruits of Vedic rituals.

Finally, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that He is *Puruṣottama,* the Supreme Being as distinct from all other entities. The following three verses (16-18) contain this important teaching:

> *dvāv imau puruṣau loke kṣaraś ca akṣara eva ca*
> *kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho akṣara ucyate.* XV.16
> There are two (kinds of) persons in this world, (spoken of in the Śāstras acc. to R), the perishable (*kṣara*) and the imperishable (*akṣara*). The perishable is all beings and the imperishable is the unchanging one (*kūṭastha*).
>
> *uttamaḥ puruṣas tv anyaḥ paramātme'ty udāhṛtaḥ*
> *yo lokatrayam āviśya bibharty avyaya Īśvaraḥ* XV.17
> The Supreme Person however is another who is designated (proclaimed by the Vedas acc. to R) as the Supreme Self (*Paramātmā*) or the transcendental Self, (acc. to S) who, permeating the three worlds, sustains them and is imperishable.
>
> *yasmāt kṣaram atīto'ham akṣarād api co' ttamaḥ*
> *ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ.* XV.18
> Because I surpass (transcend acc. to S) the perishable (person) and am higher even than the imperishable (person) I am celebrated as the *Puruṣottama* or the Supreme Person.

These are important verses in the *Gītā* which define precisely the nature of the Supreme Being.

According to Rāmānuja, they present the quintessence of the Vedic teachings (*sarvavedānāṁ sāra bhūtam artham*). Acc. to Śaṁkara, they determine the real nature of the Supreme Lord as the unconditioned and Absolute Brahman as distinct from Brahman conditioned by binding adjunct. According to the *Gītā,* however, *Paramātman,* who is other than *kṣara puruṣa* and *akṣara puruṣa,* is *Puruṣottama* or the Supreme Person. Who are *kṣara puruṣa* and *akṣara puruṣa*? Does the term *Paramātmā* who is described as *Puruṣottama* is the transcendental Self, as Śaṁkara maintains or is He the Supreme Personal God, who is the same as Lord Kṛṣṇa? According to Śaṁkara, *kṣara* means that which is perishable (*kṣaratīti kṣaraḥ*) and it stands for the totality of all mutable things. *Akṣara,* the opposite of it, is what is imperishable and it stands for *māyā,* the power of God which is the origin of the mutable things. It is *kūṭastha* or that which exists as a heap (the word *kūṭa* meaning heap). In other words, *kṣara* is the changing universe and *akṣara* is the *māyāśakti.*

For Madhva, *kṣara puruṣas* are all the embodied beings from the four-faced Brahmā downwards (*kṣara bhūtāni brahmādīni*). The *kūṭastha akṣara puruṣa* is the immutable *cit-prakṛti,* that is Goddess Lakṣmī.

Rāmānuja takes the *kṣara puruṣa* as the *jīva* associated with the non-sentient body which is subject to modification. The term *puruṣa* is used in a generic sense and it covers all the living beings from Brahmā downwards to a blade of grass which are associated with the bodies that undergo change (*stambha-paryanta kṣaraṇa svabhāva acit saṁsṛṣṭa sarvabhūta*). The *kūṭastha akṣara puruṣa* refers to the liberated self which is not associated with non-sentient body. It is *kūṭastha* as it is unchanging in nature. Here also the term *puruṣa* is used in a generic sense to cover the totality of all released selves. In other words *kṣara puruṣa* and *akṣara puruṣa* refer to the bound souls (*baddha jīva*) and liberated souls (*muktātmā*) respectively. This interpretation is more appropriate than that of Śaṁkara and Madhva, since it justifies the description of *kṣara* and *akṣara* as *puruṣa* or self. The *māyāśakti,* which is the same as non-sentient *prakṛti* described as *aparā prakṛti* in the *Gītā,* cannot be a *puruṣa.* Besides it cannot be *kūṭastha akṣara* in the sense of immutability. Nor the *cit-prakṛti* conceived by Madhva, can be considered as *puruṣa* except in a figurative sense. Besides there is no explicit mention of Goddess Śrī as *cit-prakṛti* in the *Gītā.*

Regarding the import of the term *uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ* who is designated as *Paramātmā,* Śaṁkara interprets it in favour of the transcendental Self untouched by the mutable and immutable limiting adjuncts (*kṣara-akṣaropādhi-dvaya-doṣeṇa aspṛṣṭaḥ nitya śuddha buddha mukta svabhāvaḥ uttamaḥ utkṛṣṭatamaḥ puruṣaḥ*). The term *Paramātmā* is interpreted as *Paramaḥ* or Supreme as compared to other selves conditioned by *upādhis* caused by *māyā* and *ātmā* means the Self as the inmost consciousness of all beings (*pratyak cetanaḥ*). This explanation would be sustainable if we admit the theory of two forms of Brahman as higher Brahman devoid of all limitations and lower Brahman as associated with *māyā* and also that the *jīva* is identical with Brahman. Both these theories are not reflected in the *Gītā.*

For Madhva, *uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ* is the Supreme Lord who is different from both *kṣara puruṣa* and *cit-prakṛt*. He is called *Paramātmā* or the Supreme Being.

Rāmānuja offers a more satisfactory explanation which conforms to the description given in the verses. The *uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ* or the Supreme Person is one who is other than the *baddha jīvas* or bound selves and *muktas* or the released selves. He constitutes completely a different category. The scriptural texts therefore call Him *Paramātmā* to imply that He is different from *baddhas* and *muktas,* since He enters into the threefold realm as their *ātman* viz., the non-sentient cosmic universe, the realm of the sentient selves associated with non-sentient bodies and the realm of the *muktas* which are free from the association of bodies. By entering them as their *ātman,* He supports them. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* supports this view (*antaḥ praviṣṭaḥ śāstā janānāṁ*). Thus *Paramātmā* is distinct from the selves associated with matter which is subject to modification (*kṣara puruṣa*) and also different from released souls, which though free from bondage, were associated with perishable bodies prior to liberation. Since *Paramātman* transcends both *kṣara* and *akṣara puruṣas,* He is spoken of by the Śrutis and Smṛtis (the word *loke* understood as *smṛti*) as *uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ.*

The above description of *uttama-puruṣa* does not support the concept of higher Brahman as devoid of all limitation other than the personal God or *Īśvara.*

This theory of the *Puruṣottama* is considered most sacred (*guhyatamaṁ*) and its knowledge is useful to worship Him in all ways. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

yo māṁ evam asaṁmūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam
sa sarvavid bhajati māṁ sarvabhāvena bhārata. XV.19

He who, without delusion knows Me as the Supreme Self, knows all, O Arjuna, and worships in everyway.

The fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa considers Himself as *Puruṣottama,* denoted by the words *māṁ puruṣottamaṁ,* confirms that the *Gītā* does not advocate *Nirviśeṣa* Brahman.

REFERENCES

1. See *Kaṭha Up.,* II.3.1, *ūrdhvamūla adhaḥśākhā eṣo aśvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ.*
2. *VS,* II.3.42, *aṁśo nānāvyapadeśāt anyathā ca. . . .*

CHAPTER 16

The Nature of Divine and Demoniac Beings

THE sixteenth *adhyāya* is generally titled *Daivāsura-saṁpadvibhāga-yoga*. It describes in detail the characteristics of two types of individuals born in the world with two kinds of mental disposition named as *daivī-saṁpat* or divine nature and *āsurī-saṁpat* or demoniac nature. The purpose of this classification of human beings into two distinct categories with reference to their mental disposition is to help the seekers of *mokṣa* to cultivate such characteristics as would be conducive to attain liberation from bondage and eschew qualities which stand as obstruction for the realization of Spiritual Goal. As will be seen presently, the *Gītā* states that divine endowments are helpful for liberation from bondage, whereas the demoniac tendencies lead to further bondage. Thus, as part of the *sādhana* to be pursued for attaining liberation from bondage, this subject assumes special importance. The purport of this *adhyāya* is well summed up in one verse by Yāmuna:

devāsura vibhāgokti-pūrvikā śāstra-vaśyatā
tattvānuṣṭhāna-vijñāna-sthemne ṣoḍaśa ucyate.[1]

> The sixteenth chapter deals with the distinction between the divine and demoniac natures in order to establish the knowledge of Reality and the means to be adopted to attain it, by submitting oneself to the dictates of the sacred texts.

In the concluding verse of this *adhyāya*, it is stated that *śāstra* is the only authority for determining what should be done and what should not be done (*tasmāt śāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te kāryākārya vyavasthitau*).

According to Madhva also, this *adhyāya* deals with the means of achieving the Supreme Goal and whatever else is detrimental to it.

Regarding the characteristics of divine disposition (*daivī saṁpat*) Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions the following:

abhayaṁ sattvasaṁśuddhir jñānayoga vyavasthitiḥ
dānaṁ damaś ca yajñāś ca svādhyāyas tapa ārjavam. XVI.1

Fearlessness, purity of mind, persistence in knowledge and *yoga* (acc. to S) or devotion to meditate on the self (acc. to R), almsgiving, self-control, worship, study of Vedas, austerity and uprightness.

ahiṁsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir apaiśunaṁ
dayā bhūteṣu aloluptvaṁ mārdavaṁ hrīr acāpalam. XVI.2
Non-injury, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, aversion to fault-finding, compassion to living beings, freedom from desire for sense objects, gentleness, modesty and steadiness.

tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucam adroho nātimānitā
bhavanti saṁpadam daivīṁ abhijātasya bhārata. XVI.3
Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from malice and excessive pride—these, O Pāṇḍava, are the qualities of one who is born with divine disposition.

As regards the demoniac nature, the *Gītā* enumerates the following:

dambho darpo atimānaśca krodhaḥ pāruṣyam eva ca
ajñānaṁ cā'bhijātasya pārtha saṁpadam āsurīm. XVI.4
Ostentation, arrogance, self-conceit, anger, rudeness and ignorance—these, O Arjuna, belong to him who is born with demoniac nature.

The *Gītā* further points out that the divine disposition is useful to attain liberation from bondage. The demoniac disposition causes spiritual degradation (bondage, acc. to S), (*daivīsaṁpad vimokṣāya nibandhāya āsurī matā*).

According to the *Gītā*, people are born with these two types of nature (disposition). Thus it is stated:

dvau bhūtasargau loke'smin daiva āsura eva ca. XVI.6
There are two types of beings created in the world—the divine and the demoniac.

The implication of it, acc. to R, is that men are born, divided into two types, at their very birth for working out the commandments of the Supreme Lord or act contrary to them.

Lord Kṛṣṇa presents a graphic description of the nature of the demoniac persons by knowing which one can eschew the same. The following verses (7-18) contain these details. The commentators are agreed regarding the general meaning of these verses except that certain terms are interpreted differently. We may take note of the qualities of the two types of persons as enumerated in the verses.

> *pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca jana na vidur āsuraḥ*
> *na śaucam nā'pi cā'cāro na satyaṁ teṣu vidyate.* XVI.7
> The demoniac persons do not know about the way of right action or the way of renunciation (Vedic *dharma* acc. to R). Neither they have purity, nor good conduct nor truth.
>
> *asatyam apratiṣṭhaṁ te jagad āhur anīśvaram*
> *aparasparasaṁbhūtaṁ kim anyat kāmahaitukam.* XVI.8
> They say that the world is unreal (not caused by Brahman acc. to R), without any foundation, without a Lord (*Īśvara*), not brought about in regular causal sequence and that it is caused by lust.
>
> *etāṁ dṛṣṭim avaṣṭabhya naṣṭātmāno alpabuddhyayaḥ*
> *prabhavanty ugrakarmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagato ahitāḥ.* XVI.9
> Holding fast to this view, these men of depraved character and poor understanding do cruel deeds for the destruction of the world.
>
> *kāmam āśritya duṣpūraṁ dambhamāna-madānvitāḥ*
> *mohād gṛhītva asad grāhān pravartante aśucivrataḥ.* XVI.10
> Giving themselves upto insatiable desire, filled with vanity, pride and arrogance, holding wrong views through delusion, they act with impure resolve.
>
> *cintām aparimeyāṁ ca pralayāntām upāśritāḥ*
> *kāmopabhoga paramā etāvid iti niścitāḥ.* XVI.11
> Obsessed with innumerable cares which would end with (their death), looking upon the gratification of the senses as their highest aim, they are convinced that this is all.
>
> *āśāpāśā śatair baddhāḥ kāmakrodha-parāyaṇāḥ*
> *īhante kāma bhogārtham anyāyena artha saṁcayān.* XVI.12
> Bound by hundreds of fetters in the form of hopes, given over to desire and anger, they endeavour unjustly to amass wealth through foul means for the gratification of their desires.

The *Gītā* also points out how the demoniac persons, deluded by ignorance, indulge in many undesirable thoughts. (See vv.13-15).

In a characteristic way it states:

anekacitta vibhrānta mohajāla samāvṛtāḥ
prasaktāḥ kāmabhogeṣu patanti narake aśucau. XVI.16
ahaṁkaraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ ca saṁśritāḥ
mām ātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣanto abhyasūyakāḥ. XVI.18
Given over to their egoism, power and pride and also to lust and anger, these malicious men hate Me dwelling in the bodies of themselves and others.
As to what happens to such men, Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krūrān saṁsareṣu narādhamān
kṣipamy ajasram aśubhān asurīṣu eva yoniṣu. XVI.19
These haters, who are cruel, who are the worst of men, I hurl for ever into the wombs of demons (the cycle of births and deaths).

āsurīṁ yonim āpannā mūḍhā janmani-janmani
mām aprāpyai'va kaunteya tato yanty adhamāṁ gatim. XVI.20
Fallen into the wombs of demoniac persons, these deluded beings from birth to birth, do not attain Me, but go down to the lowest state.

By way of summing up the several demoniac qualities, Lord Kṛṣṇa finally mentions the three important evil forces, which constitute the root cause of all evil so that one should strive to overcome them in order to achieve perfection. The relevant verses read:

trividhaṁ narakasye'tat dvāram nāśanam ātmanaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayam tyajet. XVI.21
Passion, anger and greed—this is threefold gateway (the root cause) of this hell (in the form of demoniac nature) which lead to the ruin of the soul. Therefore one should abandon these three.

etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya tamodvārais tribhir narāḥ
ācaraty ātmanaḥ śreyas tato yāti parāṁ gatim. XVI.22
The man who is free from these three gates to darkness, O son of Kuntī (Arjuna), strives for the good of the self and thereby attains the highest goal.

Finally, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that the main cause of this kind of degeneration (demoniac life) is the lack of reverence to Śāstra or the dictates of the sacred texts.

yaḥ śāstravidhim utsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ
na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parām gatim. XVI.23

But he who discards the scriptural injunctions and acts as his desires prompt him, he does not attain either perfection or happiness or the highest goal.

Arjuna is therefore exhorted to accept Śāstra as the sole guide for what is to be done and what is to be avoided.

tasmāc chāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te karyākārya vyavasthitau
jñātvā śāstravidhānoktam karma kartum ihā' rhasi. XVI.24

Therefore let the sacred texts (Śāstra) be your authority for determining what should be done and what should not be done. Knowing what is declared by the injunctions of the sacred texts you should do your work in this world.

The term *śāstra* does not merely mean the Vedas but it also covers all its ancillaries such as Smṛtis, Purāṇas, Dharmaśāstras. According to this verse, it is necessary for one to rely upon the sacred texts to understand the means to be adopted to attain the Supreme Goal. By implication, it follows that the *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* taught in the earlier *adhyāyas,* which constitute the *sādhana* for *mokṣa* are laid down in the sacred texts. For the successful practice of the prescribed *sādhana,* one should adopt the proper way of life involving the cultivation of ethical virtues and avoidance of the evil ways of life which are detrimental to the attainment of spiritual goal. Though this *adhyāya* does not contain any philosophical doctrines which are open to dispute among the three schools of Vedānta, it assumes importance as it provides the practical guidelines for the observance of the *sādhana* for *mokṣa* which constitutes the main theme of the *Gītā-śāstra.*

REFERENCE

1. *Gītārtha-saṁgraha,* v. 20.

CHAPTER 17

The Theory of Threefold Nature of Faith

THE seventeenth *adhyāya* is titled *Śraddhā-traya-vibhāga-yoga* or the theory of threefold division of faith. If we go by the actual contents of the *adhyāya* its scope is much wider. It not only deals with threefold classification of *śraddhā* or faith which is needed for the observance of religious activities prescribed by Śāstra but also other matters such as food (*āhāra*), sacrifice (*yajña*), penance (*tapas*) and offering of gifts (*dāna*). All these are classified into three types on the basis of the *guṇas—sattva, rajas* and *tamas* which influence the mental disposition of an individual. As in the case of the preceding *adhyāya* dealing with the *daivāsura-saṁpat,* the present one does not discuss any philosophical doctrine. But its subject matter is of practical value in so far as it serves the purpose of observing *sādhana* for *mokṣa.*

At the very outset Arjuna poses a question seeking clarification (elucidation) of the nature *śraddhā* or faith needed for practising religion:

> *ye śāstravidhim utsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ*
> *teṣāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvam āho rajas tamaḥ.* XVII.1
> What is the position (status), O Kṛṣṇa, of those who overlook the mandates of the Śāstras and offer sacrifices with faith? Is it one of *sattva, rajas* or *tamas*?

The implication of this verse is whether it is necessary to conform to the injunction of the *śāstra* or whether mere faith without conformity to scriptural injunctions would lead to the higher state. Śaṁkara takes the view that the nature of faith does not depend upon conformity to Śāstra but on his character and the worship he adopts. Rāmānuja, on the other hand, is of the view that the violation of the Śāstra out of ignorance or wilful neglect, whether with faith or without faith, is of no use. In the context of the concluding verse of the preceding chapter in which the obedience to the dictates of Śāstra is enforced, the view taken by Rāmānuja seems appropriate.

In reply to this query, Lord Kṛṣṇa first presents a detailed analysis of the threefold nature of *śraddhā* on the basis of three *guṇas*—*sattva, rajas* and *tamas* which influence the man's mental disposition. Regarding *śraddhā* or faith, the Lord says:

trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṁ sa svabhāvajā
sāttvikī rājasī cai'va tāmasī ca iti tāṁ śṛṇu. XVII.2
The faith of the embodied is of three kinds, born of their own nature, characterized as *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* Listen about it.

Śraddhā means earnest faith. Rāmānuja explains it as earnestness about the means with the belief that it is the proper way of action to achieve one's desired goal. This is classified into three kinds corresponding to the *sāttvic, rājasic* and *tāmasic* nature of a person. As will be explained later, the nature of *śraddhā* determines the types of worship one undertakes. The *Gītā* describes *śraddhā* as follows:

sattvānurūpa sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata
śraddhāmayo'yam puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ. XVII.3
The faith of every individual, O Arjuna, is in accordance with his mind (*antaḥkaraṇa* including sense organs, acc. to R). Man is of the nature of faith. What his faith is, that verily he is.

The word *sattva* is taken as the mind or *antaḥkaraṇa* (internal organ): Madhva means by it *jīva caitanya.* The significance of this verse, as explained by Rāmānuja, is that an individual is the product of his faith. That is, whatever faith an individual possesses, he is a transformation of faith of that nature. If, for instance, an individual pursues with faith in good activities, he achieves the fruits of those good activities. Consequently, attainment chiefly follows one's faith. This point is further explained with reference to the types of worship they pursue:

yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣarakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ
pretān bhūtagaṇāṁś cā'nye yajante tāmasā janāḥ. XVII.4
The *sāttvika* types worship the celestial deities, the *rājasa* types worship demi-gods (Yakṣas) and the others who are *tāmasa* types worship the departed ancestors and the hosts of ghosts.

The *śraddhā* arising from *sattva* induces a person to worship higher deities, whereas *śraddhā* of the nature of *rajas* makes one to indulge in the worship of lower beings such as Yakṣas and demons.

Tāmasika śraddhā is responsible for the worship of spirits and ghosts.

After explaining the three kinds of faith, Lord Kṛṣṇa states that the worship done with faith by overlooking the dictates of the Śāstra is not regarded as good. That is, the *śraddhā* that is not *sāttvika* and for that very reason not in accordance with the injunctions of Śāstra, is *āsurika* (demoniac).

Thus He says:

aśāstra vihitaṁ ghoraṁ tapyante ye tapo janāḥ
dambhāhaṁkārasaṁyuktāḥ kāmarāgabalānvitāḥ. XVII.5
karśayantaḥ śarīrasthaṁ bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ
māṁ cai'vā antaḥ-śarīrasthaṁ tān viddhy āsuraniścayān. XVII.6

Those men who, prompted by ostentation and egotism and impelled by the force of lust and passion, perform violent austerities, which are not ordained by the scriptures.

And thereby torturing the elements in their bodies and Me also who dwell within the body—know them to be demoniac in their resolve.

In continuation of the classification of *śraddhā* on the basis of the three *guṇas*, Lord Kṛṣṇa also classifies the food, sacrifice, penance and charity into three types on the basis of the *guṇas*, since these have a bearing on the observance of *sādhana* for *mokṣa*. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* states: "When food is pure, the mind becomes pure, when the mind is pure, the meditation becomes steadfast (*āhāra śuddhau sattva śuddhiḥ, sattva śuddhau dhruvā smṛtiḥ*).[1] The kind of food we take has its influence on the power of self-control. Regarding food (*āhāra*), the *Gītā* states:

āyuḥsattvabalārogya sukhaprītivivardhanāḥ
rasyāḥ snigdhāḥ sthirā hṛdyā āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ. XVII.8

The foods which promote longevity, mental alertness, strength, health, happiness and cheerfulness and those that are sweet, soft, nourishing and agreeable are dear to the *sāttvika* men.

kaṭvamlalavaṇātyuṣṇa tīkṣṇarūkṣavidāhinaḥ
āhārā rājasasye'ṣṭā duḥkha-śokāmaya-pradāḥ. XVII.9

The foods that are bitter, sour, very salty, very hot, pungent, dry and burning are all dear to the *rājasika* men. They produce pain, sorrow and disease.

yātayāmaṁ gatarasaṁ pūti paryuṣitaṁ ca yat
ucchiṣṭam api cā'medhyaṁ bhojanaṁ tāmasa priyam. XVII.10

That food which is stale, tasteless, putrid, decayed, refuse and unclean, is dear to *tāmasika* men.

Regarding the *yajña* or sacrifice, the *Gītā* says:

aphalākāṅkṣibhir yajño vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijyate
yaṣṭavyam eve' ti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikaḥ. XVII.11
The sacrifice (worship) which is offered as ordained by the Śāstras by those who do not seek the fruits thereof and who believe firmly that it is their duty to do it, is *sāttvika.*

abhisaṁdhāya tu phalaṁ dambhārtham api cai'va yat
ijyate bharataśreṣtha taṁ yajñaṁ viddhi rājasam. XVII.12
But that which is performed in expectation of reward or for the sake of display, know, O Arjuna, that sacrifice is *rājasika.*

vidhihīnam asṛṣṭānnaṁ mantrahīnam adakṣiṇam
śraddhāvirahitam yajñaṁ tamasaṁ paricakṣate. XVII.13
That sacrifice which is not in conformity with the scriptural injunction (not approved by the learned Brahmins acc. to R), in which no food is distributed (which uses materials not sanctioned by Śāstras acc. to R), no hymns are chanted and no fees are paid, which is bereft of faith, is declared to be *tāmasika.*

Regarding the three kinds of penance (*tapas*), the *Gītā* describes it in respect of the body, speech and mind.

devadvijaguruprajña-pūjanaṁ śaucam ārjavam
brahmacaryam ahiṁsā ca śārīraṁ tapa ucyate. XVII.14
The worship of the Gods, of the twice-born, of the preceptors and of the enlightened ones, purity, uprightness, continence and non-violence, these are called the austerity of the body.

anudvegakaraṁ vākyaṁ satyaṁ priyahitaṁ ca yat
svādhyāyābhyāsanaṁ cai'va vāṅmayaṁ tapa ucyate. XVII.15
The utterance (of words) which causes no offence, which is truthful, pleasant and beneficial and the regular recitation of the Veda—this is said to be penance of the speech.

manaḥprasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ
bhāvasaṁśuddhir ityetat tapo mānasam ucyate. XVII.16
Serenity of mind, benevolence, silence, self-control, the purity of mind—this is called the penance of mind.

This threefold penance is further classified into three types with reference to the *guṇas*.

śraddhayā parayā taptaṁ tapas tat trividhaṁ naraiḥ
aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktaiḥ sāttvikaṁ paricakṣate. XVII.17
The threefold penance practised with utmost faith by men of balanced mind without the expectation of reward, they call it *sāttvika.*

satkarmānapūjarthaṁ tapo dambhena cai'va yat
kriyate tad iha proktam rājasam calam adhruvam. XVII.18
That penance which is practised to gain respect, honour and reverence and for the sake of show, is said to be *rājasika*; it is unsteady and not lasting.

mūḍhagrāheṇa ātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ
parasya utsādanārthaṁ vā tat tāmasam udāhṛtam. XVII.19
That penance which is practised with a foolish obstinacy by means of self-torture or for causing injury to others, is said to be *tāmasika.*

Regarding the three kinds of gifts (*dāna*), the *Gītā* states:

dātavyam iti yad dānam dīyate anupakāriṇe
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad dānaṁ sāttvikaṁ smṛtam. XVII.20
That gift which is given to one from whom no return is expected, with the feeling that it is one's duty to give and which is given in proper place and time and to a worthy person, that is said to be *sāttvika.*

yat tu pratyupakārārthaṁ phalam uddiśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭam tad dānaṁ rājasaṁ smṛtam. XVII.21
But that gift which is given with the hope of a return or with the expectation of future gain or when it hurts to give, it is regarded as *rājasika.*

adeśakāle yad dānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate
asatkṛtam avajñātam tat tāmasam udāhṛtam. XVII.22
And that gift which is made at a wrong place or time or to an unworthy person, without proper ceremony or with contempt, that is called *tāmasika.*

After teaching the classification of faith on the basis of the three *guṇas* and also a similar classification of food, sacrifice, penance and charity, Lord Kṛṣṇa introduces the mystical Vedic utterance viz., *Om tat sat,* which is considered to be the threefold symbol of Brahman. The significance of each letter is explained. It is said that the syllable *Om* which signifies Brahman must be uttered as part of Vedic recitation and also while performing all religious acts enjoined by the Vedas. The syllable *tat* is to be uttered while performing sacrifices and other religious acts without the expectation of reward by those seeking release. The syllable *sat* which is employed in the sense of reality and goodness is to be uttered in respect of auspicious action. The purpose of bringing this subject seems to be, as is evident from the concluding verse, is to emphasize the importance of *śraddhā* and also conformity of the religious act to the Śāstra. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *aśraddhayā hutaṁ dattaṁ tapas taptam kṛtam ca yat*
> *asad ity ucyate pārtha na ca tat pretya no iha.* XVII.28
> Whatever offering or gift is made, whatever austerity is practised and whatever rite is observed, without faith, it is called *asat,* O Pārtha (Arjuna), it is of no value here or hereafter.

That is, it will not be praiseworthy. Neither does it help to gain liberation from bondage nor any desirable result in *saṁsāra* (*sāṁsārika phala*).

It may be observed that this *adhyāya,* though it does not cover any philosophical doctrine, has practical value for the observance of the prescribed *sādhana* for attaining *mokṣa.*

REFERENCE

1. *Ch. Up.,* VII.26.2.

CHAPTER 18

The Theory of Liberation through Renunciation

THE eighteenth *adhyāya* which is the final chapter of the *Gītā* is generally titled *Mokṣa-saṁnyāsa-yoga.* But actually it is a resume of the important topics covered in the preceding chapters along with a restatement of the nature of the *sādhana* for the attainment of liberation which constitutes the central theme of the *Gītā-śāstra.* It elucidates the concepts of *tyāga* and *saṁnyāsa* in order to determine the role of *karma* as part of the *sādhana.* It redefines the mode of observance of *karma-yoga* and reasserts, by way of conclusion, the value of *bhakti-yoga* as the direct *sādhana* for liberation. We shall examine the relevant verses by taking due note of the views of the principal commentators on these issues with a view to determining the central teaching of the *Gītā*, enshrined in this *adhyāya.*

At the outset Arjuna seeks to know the distinctive nature of *saṁnyāsa* or renunciation and also *tyāga* or relinquishment. At first Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions the different views on the subject in order to bring out the true implications of the concepts. According to some, *saṁnyāsa* means to give up all deeds which are motivated by desire for reward (*kāmyānaṁ karmaṇāṁ nyāsam*), whereas *tyāga* is the abandonment of fruits of all types of deeds, the obligatory, the occasional and even optional (*sarva-karma-phala-tyāga*). According to another view, all deeds such as sacrifices should be renounced by the aspirant for *mokṣa* since they cause bondage. Another view held by some learned men, is that deeds such as *yajña, dāna, tapas* etc., should not be given up (*yajñadāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyam*). But the final and decisive view of Lord Kṛṣṇa is:

niścayam śṛṇu me tatra tyāge bharatasattama
tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra trividhāḥ saṁ-prakīrtitāḥ. XVIII.4
yajña dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyam kāryam eva tat
yajño dānaṁ tapaś cai'va pāvanāni manīṣiṇām. XVIII.5
Hear now from Me, O Arjuna, My decision about relinquishment. Relinquishment has been explained as threefold.

> The acts of sacrifice, gifts and penance are not to be given up but should be performed, for sacrifice, gifts and penance are purifiers for the wise (those who meditate on *Paramātman*).

This verse reveals beyond any doubt that the performance of the prescribed deeds are not to be renounced since they are helpful to ensure purity of mind for those observing meditation on *Paramātman.* Hence *karma* or *karma-yoga* is regarded as the subsidiary means (*aṅga*) to *upāsanā.* This view is also in conformity with the Upaniṣadic teaching. Thus says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: Brahmins desire or seek to know Brahman by the study of the Vedas and also by means of sacrifice, gifts and austerities performed without attachment.[1]

Lord Kṛṣṇa states categorically that the deeds ought to be performed without any selfish attachment to them and also without the expectation of rewards. The relevant verse reads:

etāny api tu karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā phalāni ca
kartavyānī'ti me pārtha niścitam matam uttamam. XVIII.6

> But even these deeds ought to be performed, giving up attachment and desire for fruits. This, O Pārtha (Arjuna), is My decided and final view.

It may be observed that there is no mention in any of these verses that the performance of the prescribed deeds without any selfish attachment and desire for the fruits is intended only for *karmaniṣṭhas* or those who have not renounced all deeds, but not for the *jñānaniṣṭhas* or those who are established in the knowledge of the self after having renounced all deeds (*sarvakarma saṁnyāsinaḥ jñāna niṣṭhāḥ*). This teaching of the *Gītā* is intended for all persons who seek *mokṣa* without any distinction between *jñānaniṣṭha* and *karmaniṣṭha.*

Lord Kṛṣṇa further emphasizes that the right type of *tyāga* or renunciation which is described as *sāttvika* in character is the performance of the prescribed duty for the sake of duty by relinquishing all attachment to the deeds and also without any desire for reward. Thus He says:

kāryam ity eva yat karma niyatam kriyate arjuna
saṅgam tyaktvā phalaṁ cai'va sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ. XVIII.9

> What is done, O Arjuna, with the idea that the duty ordained should be done for the sake of duty, giving up attachment and fruit, that *tyāga* or relinquishment is considered *sāttvika.*

The *Gītā* points out that it is not possible for one who is associated with a body to abandon activities entirely (*na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṁ tyaktuṁ karmāṇy aśeṣataḥ*). One is required to engage himself in activities for the purpose of sustenance of the body. In the same way, one has to perform the prescribed duties as long as one is alive. In this context, *tyāga* or renunciation only means not the renunciation of the deed itself, but the attachment to it and also the desire for the fruits. In this sense only, *tyāga* is spoken in the scripture as the means to liberation (*tyāgenaike amṛtatvam ānasuḥ*).[2] The *karmas* do not bear undesirable fruits if they are performed with non-attachment and without any expectation of rewards. Such a renouncement of *saṅga* or attachment to *karma* is called *saṁnyāsa.* Thus the two terms *saṁnyāsa* and *tyāga* mean the same viz., the renunciation of the attachment to *karmas* and not total renunciation of the deeds.

Lord Kṛṣṇa further explains how an individual who is the agent of action is to develop the sense of non-attachment to the *karma.* There are five factors (causes) for the accomplishment of actions. These are:

> *adhiṣṭhānaṁ tatha kartā karaṇam ca pṛthagvidham*
> *vividhāśca pṛthakceṣṭā daivaṁ cai'vā' tra pañcamam.* XVIII.14
> The seat of action and likewise the agent, the various kinds of organs, the different and distinctive functions of vital breath and providence (divinity) being the fifth.

Adhiṣṭhāna or the seat refers to the physical body. *Kartā* or the agent is acc. to S, the empirical ego, the Self conditioned by the *antaḥkaraṇa,* the limiting adjunct which is caused by *avidyā.* For Rāmānuja, *kartā* is the *jīvātman.* For Madhva *kartā* is God (Viṣṇu) (*kartā Viṣṇuḥ sa hy sarva kartetyuktam*). *Karaṇa* refers to the different sense organs. *Ceṣṭā* means the functions of the vital energies within the body. *Daivam* means the Divine principle, the *antaryāmin* or Inner Ruler (acc. to R) and *adṛṣṭa* or the unseen destiny (acc. to M).

Though there are several factors responsible for the accomplishment of an action, the Supreme Being is the main cause of action. The individual self functions with the capacity endowed by *Paramātman,* out of its free will. The *jīva* is *kartā* but its *kartṛtva* is endowed by *Īśvara,* as is stated in the *Vedāntasūtra* (*parāttu tat śruteḥ*).[3] If an individual thinks that he is the doer (*kartā*), it is due to his ignorance. According to Śaṁkara, true self is not the doer (*kartā*) but by superimposing the doership which belongs to the empirical ego on the self, one thinks falsely that it is the doer. But for Rāmānuja, the *jīvātman* is *kartā* as stated both in the Upaniṣad[4] and the *Vedāntasūtra* but this *kartṛtva* or the capacity to function as an agent of action is endowed by *Paramātman.* For Madhva, God is the main *kartā* (*pradhāna kartā*), whereas *jīva* derives this power to act from *Īśvara.* Though the explanations offered by the commentators regarding *jīvā*'s *kartṛtva* differ, it is important to note that *Īśvara* is the main causal factor in the accomplishment of an action. The realization of this truth helps to develop the sense of non-attachment to action, which is important for the purpose of *tyāga* or renunciation of the fruit of deeds.

After elucidating the implication of *tyāga* or renunciation, Lord Kṛṣṇa proceeds to explain the nature of *karma* or the action in relation to the agent of action on the basis of the three *guṇas*—*sattva, rajas* and *tamas.*

There are three factors which serve as the incitement for action:

jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ parijñātā trividhā karmacodanā
karaṇaṁ karma karte iti trividhāḥ karmasaṁgrahaḥ. XVIII.18

Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knowing subject are the threefold incitement to action. The instrument, the action and the agent are the threefold composite of action.

Knowledge refers to the mental conception of the nature of the action to be performed. *Jñeya* or object of knowledge refers to the type of action to be performed and the *parijñātā* or knower here refers to the person who is aware of that action. That is, injunction such as to do a sacrifice involves the knowledge of sacrifice, the method to be followed and the agent of action who is the knower of the sacrifice. The action itself viz., sacrifice, is threefold: the accessories needed for sacrifice, the *yāga* itself (*karma*) and the agent or the one who performs it (*kartā*).

The *jñāna, karma* and *kartā* are also of threefold character, in accordance with the difference in *guṇas* (*jñāna karma ca kartā ca tridheva guṇabhedataḥ*).

Regarding the *sāttvika jñāna*, the *Gītā* says:

sarvabhūteṣu yenai'kaṁ bhāvam avyayam īkṣate
avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu taj jñānam viddhi sāttvikam. XVIII.20

Know that knowledge to be *sāttvika* by which one sees in all beings, one immutable self as undivided among all divided beings.

The implication of this verse, acc. to R, is that the individual self, though it is different for each individual by virtue of its association with different types of bodies, is same in respect of its essential nature. That is, it is unchanging and imperishable and it is not affected by the fruits accrued from action. Such a knowledge of the true nature of the self while performing action is regarded as *sāttvika.*

For Śaṁkara, it is the realization of the self as non-dual. It is the same one Reality (*ekaṁ bhāvam*), which is immutable, exists in all diversified beings or bodies. It remains like space undivided.

For Madhva, *ekaṁ bhāvam* refers to Viṣṇu, who is the same in all beings. Regarding *rājasika jñāna,* the *Gītā* says:

pṛthaktvena tu yaj jñānam nānābhāvān pṛthagvidhān
vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi rājasam. XVIII.21
But that knowledge which sees multiplicity of beings in the different creatures by reason of their separateness (individuality), know that knowledge is of the nature of *rajas.*

Regarding the *tāmasika* knowledge it is stated:

yat tu kṛtsnavad ekasmin kārye saktam ahetukam
atattvārthavad alpaṁ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam. XVIII.22
But that knowledge is pronounced to be *tāmasika* which clings on to one single effect as if it were the whole, which is not founded on reason and which is untrue and insignificant.

The significance of these verses is that even in respect of the performance of *karma* such as a *yāga,* the individual should develop the *sāttvika* attitude with the proper knowledge of *jīvātman,* who is the agent of action.

In the same way a correct knowledge of action (*karma*) is also called for. Even action is of three kinds, in accordance with the influence of *guṇas* on it.

The *sāttvika karma* is:

niyataṁ saṅgarahitam arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam
aphalaprepsunā karma yat tat sāttvikam ucyate. XVIII.23
The obligatory deed which is performed without attachment, without love or hate, by one who seeks no reward for it, is *sāttvika.* But that action which is done in great strain by one who seeks to gratify his desires or is impelled by egoism, is said to be *rājasika.* (XVIII.24)

The action which is undertaken through ignorance without regard to the consequences or to loss and injury and without regard to one's human capacity, that is said to be *tāmasika.* (XVIII.25)

Even with regard to the *kartā* or the agent of action the *Gītā* makes a threefold distinction on the basis of the *guṇas*:

muktasaṅgo anahaṁvādī dhṛtyutsāha samanvitaḥ
siddhyasiddhyor nirvikāraḥ kartā sātvika ucyate. XVIII.26
The *kartā* who is free from attachment (to the fruits of action), who is devoid of ego (the feeling of his being the agent of action), who possesses a steady mind and who is full of zeal and remains unmoved by success or failure, is of *sāttvika* nature.
The *kartā* who is swayed by passion, who eagerly seeks the fruits of his acts, who is greedy, of harmful nature and impure and who is moved by joy and sorrow, is *rājasika* in nature. (XVIII.27)

Regarding *kartā* who is *tāmasika* in nature, the *Gītā* says:

ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho naikṛtiko alasaḥ
viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate. XVIII.28
The *kartā* who is not qualified to observe the prescribed deeds (*ayuktaḥ*), who is not trained by preceptor, stubborn, deprived, dishonest, indolent, despondent and indulged in doing harmful acts to others is regarded as *tāmasika* in nature.

A similar classification is also made in terms of *buddhi* or intellect and *dhṛti* or the perseverance to accomplish a task, on the basis of the *guṇas.*

Regarding *sāttvikī buddhi,* the *Gītā* says:

pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye
bandhaṁ mokṣaṁ ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī. XVIII.30
That intellect which is capable of knowing the means of prosperity (paths of rites, acc. to S) and means of liberation (the path of renunciation, acc. to S) and what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what binds and what frees the soul is of the nature of *sattva.*
That intellect by which one wrongly understands *dharma* and *adharma,* as also what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, is of the nature of *rājasa.*

That intellect, which being enveloped by darkness, conceives as right what is wrong and sees all things in a perverted way (contrary to truth) is of the nature of *tāmasa.*

The three kinds of *dhṛti* or firmness of mind are described as follows:

dhṛtyā yayā dhāryate manaḥ prāṇendriyakriyāḥ
yogena avyabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī. XVIII.33
That unwavering firmness by which, through meditation (*yoga*), one controls the activities of the mind, the life breaths and the senses, is regarded as *sāttvika dhṛti.*

yayā tu dharmakāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayate arjuna
prasaṅgena phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī. XVIII.34
But the firmness with which one is desirous of fruits, holds fast to duty, pleasure and wealth, is of the nature of *rajas.*

yayā svapnaṁ bhayam śokaṁ viṣādaṁ madam eva ca
na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī. XVIII.35
That *dhṛti* by which a foolish person does not give up sleep, fear, grief, depression and passion, is of the nature of *tamas.*

Even happiness (*sukham*) to which the *jñāna, karma* and *kartā* etc., are subservient, is classified into three kinds in accordance with the *guṇas.*

These are:

yat tad agre viṣaṁ iva pariṇāme amṛtopamam
tat sukhaṁ sāttvikaṁ proktam ātmabuddhiprasādajam. XVIII.37
That happiness which is like poison at first and becomes like nectar in the end, which springs from clear understanding of the nature of the self—is said to be *sāttvika.*

viṣayendriya saṁyogād yat tad agre amṛtopamam
pariṇāme viṣam iva tat sukhaṁ rājasaṁ smṛtam. XVIII.38
That happiness which arises from the contact of the senses and their objects and which is like nectar at first but like poison at the end is said to be *rājasika.*

yad agre ca anubandhe ca sukham mohanam ātmanaḥ
nidrālasya pramādothaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam. XVIII.39
That happiness which deludes the self both at the beginning and at the end, through sleep, sloth and error—is regarded *tāmasika.*

The details so far furnished regarding the classification of the nature of *karma*, its knowledge, the doer of it (*kartā*), so also the mental qualitites such as *buddhi* and *dhṛti*, do not seem to be philosophically significant. Nor is there any major controversy regarding their nature and implication among the commentators. In fact, Madhva has not commented on these verses (19-39). The only purpose of narrating these details to Arjuna seems to be, as briefly mentioned by Rāmānuja in his bhāṣya, is to induce Arjuna to cultivate the *sāttvika* attitude in all matters relating to the performance of prescribed deeds, as this would help to develop the purity of mind (*sattva-śuddhi*) which is needed for making success in the pursuit of the spiritual discipline for attainment of *mokṣa.*

The *Gītā* also provides a detailed classification of the human beings in accordance with the inherent qualities—the three *guṇas* viz., *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* In fact the categorization of the human beings into four broad classes—as brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra—to which a brief reference is made in an earlier *adhyāya,* is based on the inherent qualities (*guṇas*) of the beings. The different duties are laid down for them in accordance with these qualities. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa in the earlier *adhyāya* (IV.13): *cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛṣṭaṁ guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ.* "The four castes are created by Me through the classification of the *guṇas* and duties." For the observance of the *sādhana,* and in particular *karma-yoga,* the performance of the prescribed duties has great relevance. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore narrates in detail the duties and occupation of the four castes flowing from the distribution of the *guṇas* in accordance with their inherent respective dispositions. First He states:

> *brāhmaṇa kṣatriya viśaṁ śūdrāṇāṁ ca parantapa*
> *karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāvaprabhavair guṇaiḥ.* XVIII.41
> The duties of brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras are clearly divided, O Arjuna, according to *guṇas,* born of their nature.

The *sattva* and other *guṇas* are inherent in the respective castes as a result of their past *karma.* The sacred texts have allotted prescribed duties taking due note of these inherent qualitites.

The duties of brāhmaṇa arising from his inherent nature are:

> *śamo damas tapaḥ śaucaṁ kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca*
> *jñānaṁ vijñānam āstikyaṁ brahmakarma svabhāvajam.* XVIII.42

Control of the senses and the mind, austerity, purity, forbearance, uprightness, wisdom, knowledge and faith in religion, are the duties of brāhmaṇa, born of his nature.

The duties of kṣatriya are:

śauryam tejo dhṛtir dākṣyaṁ yuddhe cā' py apalāyanam
dānam Īśvarabhāvaśca kṣātram karma svabhāvajam. XVIII.43
Valour, vigour, steadiness, resourcefulness, not fleeing even in a battle, generosity and leadership are the duties of a kṣatriya born of his nature.

As regards vaiśyas and śūdras the *Gītā* says:

kṛṣigaurakṣya vāṇijyaṁ vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam
paricaryātmākam karma śūdrasyā'pi svabhāvajam. XVIII.44
Agriculture, tending cattle and trade are the duties of a vaiśya born of his nature. The duty of a śūdra is one of service, born of his nature.

The object of defining the specific duties of the four castes seems to be to bring out the fact that human beings are also classifiable on the basis of the three *guṇas* which are inherent in them. Another important purpose of specifying the duties of different types of individuals is to emphasize that the performance of the duty or an endeavour undertaken for spiritual progress becomes well established if it is adopted in accordance with one's innate capacity. This point is evident from the following teaching of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

sve-sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ
svakarmaniratah siddhiṁ yathā vindati tac chṛṇu. VIII.45
Devoted each to his own duty, man attains perfection (the Supreme State, acc. to S). Listen as to how a man devoted to his duty attains perfection (Supreme State).

yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānāṁ yena sarvamidaṁ tatam
svakarmaṇa tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ. XVIII.46
He (*Paramātman*) from whom all beings arise and by whom all this is pervaded—by worshipping Him through the performance of his own duty, a man attains perfection.

According to this teaching, the performance of the duty as laid down in the Śāstra according to one's *varṇa* as worship of *Paramātman* is important for attaining the higher state.

Lord Kṛṣṇa further extols the observance of one's own duty (*svadharma*) in the following words:

> *śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt*
> *svabhāvaniyataṁ karma kurvan nā'pnoti kilbiṣam.* XVIII.47
> Better is one's own duty though imperfectly carried out, than the duty of another, though well done (carried out perfectly). When one does the duty ordained by his own nature, he incurs no sin.

The terms *svadharma* and *paradharma* are interpreted differently. For Śaṁkara, *svadharma* means one's own duty which is prescribed for the respective individuals in accordance with their nature and *paradharma* stands for the duty of another. Adopting this meaning, Śaṁkara explains that the performance of one's own duty, even imperfectly, is more praiseworthy than doing another's duty. The reason for taking this view is that *svadharma* is *svabhāva-niyatam* which means that it is dictated by one's own nature. That is, it is born from one's own nature (*sva-bhāvajam*). Hence it does not cause any sin (*kilbiṣam*). As poison is not harmful to a worm born in it, so one does not incur any sin by performing a duty dictated by one's own nature.

For Rāmānuja, *svadharma* and *paradharma* stand, in the present context, for *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* respectively. This is the interpretation adopted on a similar verse in the third *adhyāya* (III.35). *Svadharma,* acc. to R, means that which is suitable for performance by oneself in the form of worshipping *Paramātman* by relinquishing *kartṛtva,* etc. (*tyakta kartṛtvādiko madārādhānarūpaḥ svadharmaḥ svena eva upādātum yogyo dharmaḥ*). As we have explained in chapter 3, it does not refer in the present context to *varṇāśrama-dharma.* Hence, *paradharma* in this context refers to the practise of *jñāna-yoga. Karma-yoga* which is easier to practise than *jñāna-yoga* involving the control of the senses etc., is considered to be better even if it is not perfectly done, than the arduous *jñāna-yoga.* This is what is explained in the later part of the verse "*svabhāva niyatam karma kurvan nā'pnoti kilbiṣam.*" It means—As *karma* consists of the activities of the sense organs, it is ordained by nature for one who is associated with *prakṛti,* i.e., the body. So by performing *karma-yoga* one does not incur any sin. But *jñāna-yoga* is fraught with problems since it requires the control of the senses from the very beginning. One following that path is likely to incur sin from negligence. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore exhorts Arjuna to take to *karma-yoga* even if it be defective:

> *sahajam karma kaunteya sadoṣamapi na tyajet*
> *sarvārambhā hi doṣena dhūmena agnir iva āvṛtaḥ.* XVIII.48
> One should not relinquish works suited to one's nature, O Arjuna, though it may be defective; for all enterprises are clouded with defects, as fire by smoke.

He further points out that the work done with the spirit of renunciation of all attachment to it and free from desire for fruits would lead to the higher state. The relevant verse reads:

> *asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigataspṛhaḥ*
> *naiṣkarmya-siddhiṁ paramām saṁnyāsena adhigacchati.* XVIII.49
> He whose understanding remains unattached to everything, who has conquered the mind and who is free from desires, attains through renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) supreme perfection transcending all activities (*naiṣkarmya-siddhiṁ*).

According to this verse, *karma* or *karma-yoga* observed with the spirit of renunciation of the desire for fruits will lead to the *naiṣkarmya-siddhi.* The concept of *naiṣkarmya* is understood by Śaṁkara as the state in which one is free from the performance of *karmas.* It is the state which is attained by a monk (*saṁnyāsī*) who has renounced all *karmas.* According to Śaṁkara, this is the culminating stage of *jñāna-yoga* in which one becomes a *sthitaprajña* or firmly established in the knowledge of the self (*ātman*). Such a state of attainment would lead to total liberation from bondage.[5]

For Madhva, *naiṣkarmya-siddhi* is *naiṣkarmya phalam yoga siddhi.* It means *yoga-siddhi* or *upāya-siddhi* which leads to *mokṣa.*

According to Rāmānuja, the term *saṁnyāsa* in the verse means *tyāga* or renunciation of *kartṛtva buddhi* and the abandonment of desire for fruits, as explained earlier. The question of renunciation of the performance of all deeds does not arise at the stage of *karma-yoga* leading to *jñāna-yoga,* also known as *dhyāna-yoga. Naiṣkarmya-siddhi* therefore does not mean total abandonment of the *karmas,* but on the contrary it refers to the culminating stage of *dhyāna-yoga* in which the sense organs of an individual are not functioning outwardly, since the mind is concentrated on the self (*ātman*). Besides, in the subsequent verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa is going to teach how to attain the goal of *dhyāna-yoga* viz., *brahma* (*jīvātman*).

Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he would instruct him the manner of attaining this higher state:

> *siddhiṁ prāpto yathā brahma tathā' pnoti nibodha me*
> *samāsenai'va kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā.* XVIII.50
> Learn from Me in brief, O Arjuna, how one who has attained perfection, attains to *brahma,* who is the Supreme consummation of knowledge.

The term *brahma* is interpreted differently by the commentators. For Śaṁkara, it stands for the Supreme Brahman. For Rāmānuja, it denotes *jīvātman,* while Madhva takes it as *cit-prakṛti* or Goddess Lakṣmī.[6] If one has already attained *siddhi* or perfection, the need of knowing the means of further attainment of Supreme Brahman does not arise. By interpreting the word *brahma* as Lakṣmī as Madhva has done, the need of knowing the *sādhana* for attaining Brahman may be justified. But the concept of Lakṣmī does not figure in the *Gītā* and the adoption of this meaning for the word *brahma* does not therefore appear to be relevant. Besides, the practice of *dhyāna-yoga* suggested for the purpose of attaining *siddhi* and the fact that it leads to *parāṁ bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* as stated in the later verses would also not justify the contemplation of Brahman. It therefore follows that the attainment of *jīvātman* is the goal of *jñāna-yoga,* as outlined in the sixth *adhyāya.*

The following three verses (51-53) describe the method to be adopted to attain *brahma* (*jīvātman*):

> *buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānam niyamya ca*
> *śabdādīn viṣayāṁs tyaktvā rāgadveṣau vyudasya ca.* XVIII.51
> Endowed with a purified understanding (of the true nature of the self acc. to R), controlling the mind firmly, turning away from sound and other sense objects, casting aside like and dislike.

> *viviktasevī laghvāśī yata vākkāya mānasaḥ*
> *dhyāna yoga paro nityam vairāgyam samupāśritaḥ.* XVIII.52
> Resorting to solitude, eating lightly, controlling speech, body and mind, ever engaged (absorbed) in the *yoga* of meditation and taking refuge in dispassion.

> *ahaṁkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ parigraham*
> *vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahmabhūyāya kalpate.* XVIII.53
> Forsaking egoism, power, arrogance, desire, wrath and sense of possession, with no feeling of 'mine' and being tranquil—he

becomes worthy for the state of *brahma* (pure self acc. to R) or for becoming Brahman(acc. to S).

Acc. to M, *brahma bhūyāya kalpate* means that he is fit to be in Brahman with the mind centred on Brahman having attained Goddess Lakṣmī (*lakṣmīm prāptaḥ*) (*brahmaṇibhāvo brahmabhūyaṁ brahmaṇi sthitaḥ sarvadā tanmanaska iti*).

What is the nature of the *yoga* that is prescribed in these verses for becoming *brahma-bhūya*? The description given in the verses fits with *jñāna-yoga,* also known as *dhyāna-yoga,* outlined in the sixth *adhyāya.* If this view is admitted, obviously the attainment of the final state cannot be but the direct realization of the true nature of *jīvātman.* In the absence of meditation on *Paramātman,* this *yoga* is not *bhakti-yoga,* as outlined in the second *ṣaṭka* of the *Gītā.* Besides, in the subsequent verse (54), Lord Kṛṣṇa says that one attains Supreme devotion to Me (*paraṁ madbhakti*). Thus it is stated:

> *brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati*
> *samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktiṁ labhate parāṁ.* XVIII.54
>
> Having realized the state of *brahma* (having become one with Brahman acc. to S) and being tranquil, he neither grieves nor desires. Regarding all beings alike, he attains Supreme devotion to Me.

This verse explicitly states that he who has realized the state of *brahma* (*brahma-bhūta*), attains *bhakti* towards the Lord. There is no suggestion here that he becomes one with Brahman or realizes his identity with Brahman. Further, in the next verse, it is stated that through this *bhakti,* he comes to know Him in His true form and after having known Him, he enters into Him. The relevant verse reads:

> *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cā' smi tattvataḥ*
> *tato māṁ tattvato jñātva viśate tadanantaram.* XVIII.55
>
> Through devotion (*bhakti*) he comes to know Me fully—who I am and what I am. Thus having known Me in true form, he then enters into Me.

The verse, as it reads, conveys clearly that through *bhakti,* one gets the knowledge of the true nature of *Paramātman* and after obtaining this knowledge, one will attain *Paramātman,* which is the Supreme Goal of *bhakti-yoga.* This view is in conformity with the teaching of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the eleventh *adhyāya* emphasizing that only through single-minded devotion it is possible to know *Paramātman* fully, to have a direct clear vision of Him and thereafter enter into Him, that is, attain Him in the state of *mokṣa*. The relevant verse reads:

> *bhaktyā tu ananyayā śakya aham evaṁvidho arjuna; jñātuṁ*
> *draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca paraṁtapa.* (XI.54)

Three stages are indicated in the practice of *bhakti-yoga*: *jñāna*, *darśana* and *praveśa*. *Jñāna* refers to the obtaining the full knowledge of *Paramātman* through the study of scripture (*tattvataḥ śāstraiḥ jñātum*); *darśana* refers to the full vision of *Paramātman* (*tattvataḥ sākṣātkāra*); *praveśa* refers to the actual attainment of *Paramātman* in the state of *mokṣa* (*tattvataḥ praveśa*). It therefore follows that *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* is the only direct means of attainment of *Paramātman* by the devotee who seeks *mokṣa* or liberation.

However, Śaṁkara interprets this verse to mean that the devotee or the knower realizes that he is the same as the Supreme Lord and thereby affirms the Advaita doctrine of identity of *jīva* and Brahman. The statement "*bhaktyā mām abhijānāti tattvataḥ*" implies, acc. to S, that the devotee knows through devotion as to what *Paramātman* is,that is, with the extensive differences created by limiting adjuncts (*upādhikṛta-vistarebhyaḥ*)and also what He is in reality, that is,when all distinctions created by the limiting adjuncts are destroyed (*vidhvasta-sarvopādhiḥ*). Having known Him thus, he enters into *Paramātman* in the sense that he realizes that he is non-different from the Supreme Self (*Paramātman*). This interpretation can be justified on the basis of the premise that *jīva* and Brahman are identical (*ātmaikya*) but we do not find full support for this theory in the *Gītā*. Besides, this explanation of Śaṁkara does not conform to the teaching contained in v. XI.54, referred to above, which mentions three distinct stages of *bhakti-yoga* viz., *jñāna*, *darśana* and *praveśa*, unless *darśana* and *praveśa* are taken as having the same implication as *jñāna* viz., direct realization of the identity of the self and *Paramātman*. But according to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,[7] *śravaṇa* and *manana* secures the mediate knowledge of Brahman leading to *nididhyāsana* or devoted unceasing meditation on Brahman culminating in *darśana* or vision of Brahman. It is only after obtaining *darśana*, one attains *Paramātman*. According to the *Gītā* also, *jñāna* leads to *darśana* and after *darśana* follows *praveśa*. That is, it is only after obtaining the *jñāna* and *darśana* of *Para-*

mātman through *ananyabhakti,* the devotee attains Him in the state of *mukti.* Thus, *darśana* and *praveśa* are not the same viz., the direct realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman.

Lord Kṛṣṇa further tells Arjuna that even in respect of all *karmas* including those done for a particular result, one can attain the higher state, if the same are performed by totally surrendering oneself to *Paramātman.*

> *sarvakarmāṇy api sadā kurvāṇo madvyapāśrayaḥ*
> *matprasādād avāpnoti śāśvataṁ padamavyayam.* XVIII.56
> Doing continuously all actions whatsoever, and taking refuge in Me, one attains the eternal and immutable abode.

Arjuna is therefore advised to surrender mentally all actions to *Paramātman* and fix his thought on Him.

> *cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi saṁnyaśa matparaḥ*
> *buddhiyogam upāśritya maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava.* XVIII.57
> Surrendering in thought (mentally) all actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal and resorting to *buddhi-yoga,* focus your thoughts constantly on Me.

Buddhi-yoga here implies mental concentration, acc. to S (mental attitude required while practising *jñāna-yoga* such as the sense of not being the doer and absence of desire for fruits etc.).

By fixing one's thoughts on *Paramātman,* one can cross over all difficulties by His grace (*maccittaḥ sarva durgāṇi matprasādāt tariṣyati*). The *Gītā* points out that one cannot escape from doing one's duty to which one is bound by nature:

> *svabhāvajena kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā;*
> *kartuṁ ne'cchasi yan mohāt kariṣyasy avaśo'pi tat.* XVIII.60
> O Arjuna, bound by your own duty born out of your own inner disposition, having no control over your own will, you will be compelled to do that very thing which you now desire not to do through delusion.

The verse signifies that a person is driven to do a work by the compulsive power of one's nature or innate disposition. In this connection, Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna how every activity of a human being is controlled by *Īśvara* or the Divine Being who abides in the heart of each individual. Thus He says:

> *Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛddeśe arjuna tiṣṭhati*
> *bhrāmayan sarva bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.* XVIII.61

The Lord abides in the hearts of all beings. O Arjuna, causing them to turn round by His power as if they were mounted on a machine.

As stated in the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* Brahman or the Supreme God abides in the self of each individual as the *antaryāmin* or Inner Controller. As the *antaryāmin* he controls all the activities of an individual. In an earlier *adhyāya,* the *Gītā* says, "I am seated in the hearts of all. From Me, memory, knowledge and their removal arise *sarvasya cā' haṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭaḥ mattaḥ smṛti jñānam apohanaṁ ca,* XV.15." It is not the blind fate or destiny that controls the events of the human beings, but on the contrary, it is the Divine Being who abides within, who regulates all activities.

Bearing in mind this important philosophical teaching, Arjuna is advised to seek refuge in the Lord with his being:

tam eva śaraṇaṁ gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata
tatprasadāt parāṁ śāntiṁ sthānam prāpyasi śāśvatam. XVIII.62
Seek refuge in Him alone, Arjuna, with the whole of your being.
By His grace you shall find Supreme peace and eternal abode.

After elaborately instructing Arjuna about all aspects of the *sādhana* or ways and means of attaining the Supreme Goal, Lord Kṛṣṇa imparts the final teaching expressed in the following two significant verses:

manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru
mām evai'ṣyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo'si me. XVIII.65
Focus your mind on Me; be devoted to Me; worship Me; prostrate before Me; you shall come to Me; I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me.
sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja
ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ. XVIII.66
Relinquishing all *dharmas,* seek Me alone for refuge. I shall release you from all sins. Do not grieve.

The first verse is a reiteration of the concluding verse of the ninth *adhyāya* in which the nature and importance of *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* as the means of attainment of *Paramātman* is emphasized. The second verse stresses the need of seeking *Paramātman* as the sole refuge in order to overcome the obstacles in the way of accomplishing the cherished spiritual goal.

These verses are interpreted differently by the commentators. Śaṁkara construes the first verse in favour of the individual becoming one with *Paramātman* by the realization of the identity of *jīva* and *Paramātman* through the means of *bhakti* or devotion to God. Regarding the second verse, its implication is that by the renouncement of all *karmas* (the word *dharma* being taken as the performance of prescribed deeds), one can attain *Paramātman* in the sense of realizing his identity (becoming one) with Him who is the same in all beings. The self-surrender or seeking God as refuge is intended for the purpose of overcoming all evils standing as obstacles in the way of self-realization.

According to Rāmānuja, the first verse describes the nature and components of *bhakti-yoga* which comprises *manana* or *dhyāna* on *Paramātman* to be observed with *bhakti, yajana* or worship of God and *namaskāra* or offering salutation to God. As explained in chapter 9, *bhakti-yoga* which is the same as *nididhyāsana* or unceasing meditation on *Paramātman* referred to in the Upaniṣad, is the only direct means to attain *Paramātman.*

Regarding the second verse, the *śaraṇāgati* or surrendering of oneself to *Paramātman* seeking Him as sole refuge implies according to R, the relinquishment of the sense of ego as the doer of deeds (*kartṛtvatyāga*) and also the desire for their fruits (*phalatyāga*). This is what is meant by *sarva-dharma parityāga* and not the total renunciation of all *karmas,* as Śaṁkara interprets. By the observance of *śaraṇāgati* in this manner all the sins of the past standing as obstacles in the way of attaining *Paramātman* will be removed by His grace. Thus, the *śaraṇāgati* advocated in the *Gītā* serves as an aid (*aṅga*) to the *bhakti-yoga* which is the direct means to *mokṣa.*

According to Madhva, the first verse refers to different modes of *bhakti* or *dhyāna-yoga* which is the means to *aparokṣa-jñāna* or the direct perception of *Paramātman* leading to *mokṣa.* Regarding the second verse, the *sarvadharma parityāga* implies only the relinquishment of the fruits of the deeds and not the renunciation of all duties and obligations. *Saravapāpa* refers to the sins committed from the beginningless past lives (*anādijanmakṛta pāpa*).This *śaraṇāgati,* according to Madhva, is to be observed in the same spirit as the *dhyāna-yoga* referred to in the preceding verse as *manmanā,* etc. Such a *śaraṇāgati* done with the conviction that Viṣṇu is the Supreme Deity, that He is the sole protector and that the devotee is a subservient (*dāsa*)to the Supreme Lord, is sure to confer the *mokṣa* to him. It is not, however, regarded as an aid (*aṅga*) to *bhakti-yoga,* as conceived by Rāmānuja.

However according to the teachings of the *Gītā, bhakti-yoga* aided by *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* is the direct *sādhana* for the attainment of the Supreme Goal. In the words of *Gītā,* it is the *rāja-vidyā* or the most secret doctrine (*paramaṁ-guhyam*).

REFERENCES

1. *Bṛ. Up.,* IV.4-22.
2. *Mahānārāyaṇa Up.,* VI.4.
3. *VS,* II-3-41.
4. See *Praśna Up.,* V.9.
5. See ŚB on *BG,* XVIII.49. *Naiṣkarmyasiddhim nirgatāni karmāṇi yasmāt niṣkriya-brahmātma-saṁbodhāt sa niṣkarmā, tasya bhāvaḥ naiṣkarmyam, naiṣkarmyam ca tat siddhiśca sā naiṣkarmya-siddhiḥ.*
6. See *Gītā-tātparya—naiṣkarmya siddhiṁ prāpto bhūtva brahmākhyāyā mahālakṣmyāḥ sakāśam yathā āpnoti tathā nibodha.*
7. *Bṛ. Up., ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ.*

PART II

The Philosophical Doctrines of the *Bhagavadgītā*

In part I we have presented the essential teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* as enshrined in each *adhyāya* along with the views of the three principal commentators, Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. It may be observed from the contents of the preceding chapters that the verses cover the variety of philosophical, theological and ethical ideas and that they do not appear to contain a coherent system of philosophy as such in sequential order, as found in the *Vedāntasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa. Though each *adhyāya* bears a specific title conveying its subject-matter, it deals with several topics. However, on a closer study of the *Gītā* verses with the help of the commentaries of the ancient Ācāryas who have attempted to explain the philosophical significance of the verses, we would be able to discern that these teachings are aimed to expound the three fundamental doctrines of the Vedānta viz., *tattva* or the Ultimate Reality, *sādhana* or the means of its attainment and *parama-puruṣārtha* or the Supreme Goal. This justifies the inclusion of the *Bhagavadgītā* among the three basic sourcebooks of Vedānta (*prasthāna-traya*) and also the accordance of high status to it by the tradition as the Upaniṣads, the *brahma-vidyā* and the *Yoga-śāstra*. A study of the *Bhagavadgītā* only from the standpoint of Vedānta reveals that a system of philosophy is embedded in this religious classic. In the present part, we shall attempt to outline this philosophy by consolidating the teachings of the *Gītā* and presenting them as coherent doctrines under the following headings:

I. The *Tattvas*
    1. The Doctrine of *Paramātman*
    2. The Doctrine of *Jīvātman*
    3. The Doctrine of the Universe

II. The *Sādhana*
    1. The Doctrine of *Karma-yoga*
    2. The Doctrine of *Jñāna-yoga*

3. The Doctrine of *Bhakti-yoga*
4. The Concept of *Prapatti*
5. The Ethical and Religious Prerequisites

III. The Doctrine of *Parama-puruṣārtha*

We shall endeavour to give an exposition of each of these theories on the basis of the material found in the *Gītā* without being unduly influenced by the views of any particular school of Vedānta. This would enable us to understand the philosophy of the *Gītā* and also assess the extent to which the doctrines conceived by the individual commentator are actually reflected in the *Bhagavadgītā.*

CHAPTER 19

The *Tattvas*

I. THE DOCTRINE OF *PARAMĀTMAN*

THE *adhyāyas* VII-XII generally cover this subject. In fact, the *adhyāya* VIII is named as *Jñāna-vijñāna-yoga* which means the knowledge of *Paramātman* in all its aspects. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself tells Arjuna that He will impart to him *jñāna* and *vijñāna.* The *adhyāya* X which is named *vibhūti-yoga* mostly deals with the glorious manifestation of the Supreme Lord, while the XI bearing the title of *Viśvarūpa-darśana-yoga* describes the universal form of the Lord. The *adhyāya* XV named *Puruṣottama-yoga* also throws light on the *svarūpa* or nature of *Paramātman.* On the basis of this material we can get a fairly good account of the theory of *Paramātman.*

It may be noted at the outset that the *Gītā* maintains right from the beginning to the end that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the very Brahman of the Upaniṣads. This is evident from the following verses addressed to Lord Kṛṣṇa by Arjuna after listening to the glory of the Lord:

> *parama brahma parama dhāma pavitraṁ paramaṁ bhavān*
> *puruṣam śāśvataṁ divyam ādidevam ajaṁ vibhum.*
> *ahustvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣir nāradas tathā*
> *asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayam cai'va bravīṣi me.*[1]
>
> You are the Supreme Brahman; the Supreme Light and the Supreme Purifier. All the sages proclaim that you are the eternal Divine Person, the Primal Lord, the Unborn and the All-pervading. So also the Divine Nārada, Asita, Devala, and Vyāsa. You yourself teach me the same.

Arjuna also says that all that is stated by the Lord is true (*sarvam etad ṛtaṁ manye*).

The description of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Brahman rules out Śaṁkara's concept of *Nirguṇa* Brahman as the Ultimate Reality (*para-tattva*). As will be seen presently, throughout the *Gītā* the Supreme Being who is equated with Lord Kṛṣṇa is described in terms which denote the essential characteristics of Brahman mentioned in the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntāsūtra* viz., as the primary cause of the origin and dissolution of the universe (*jagat-kāraṇa*), as the supporter of the universe (*ādhāra*), as the Inner Controller of all beings (*antaryāmin*) etc. The entire *adhyāya* which describes the *vibhūtis* or glories of the Lord and also the *adhyāya* XI dealing with *viśvarūpa* or the cosmic form of God confirm beyond any doubt that the Supreme Being depicted in the *Bhagavadgītā* is Brahman as endowed with attributes (*saviśeṣa*) and not the one devoid of all determinations(*nirviśeṣa*). Whether or not the two forms of Brahman as *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* are implied in the *Gītā* will be discussed later.

According to the *Mahābhārata*, Kṛṣṇa born as the son of Vāsudeva, is an incarnation of Godhead. This may give raise to the question whether a God-incarnate human being can be regarded as Brahman of the Upaniṣads. But this doubt is set aside by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself who explains the significance of the Divine incarnation (*avatāra*). According to the theory of *avatāra* mentioned in the *adhyāya* IV[2] the Supreme Being, though unborn and of immutable nature, can manifest Himself in a human or any other form out of His own will (*ātma māyayā*), as and when need arises to protect the pious and destroy the wicked. The Divine birth is not subject to *karma*, as is the case with the birth of the individual souls but it is due to the spontaneity of the Divine will. The form He assumes, the body in which He incarnates Himself is a particular configuration of His own radiant and transcendent spiritual nature (*svāṁ prakṛtiṁ adhiṣṭhāya*). In other words, God while incarnating Himself in a human form does not abrogate His intrinsic nature. This theory of *avatāra* is also supported by the scriptural text. Thus says the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*: *ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate.*[3] It means: "Being unborn, He is born in various forms." It signifies that *Paramātman* who is not subject to *karma*, takes many births out of His own free will.

The *Gītā* affirms that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate metaphysical Reality by stating that there is nothing higher than Him (*mattaḥ parataraṁ nā'anyat kiṁcid asti*).[4] It also states that there is none equal to Lord Kṛṣṇa and that no one is greater than Him in three worlds. (*na tvatsamo'sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto'nyo lokatraye'pi apratima prabhāvaḥ*).[5] The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* describes the Supreme Being in the same words: *na tat samaśca abhyadhikaśca dṛśyate,*[6] "No one is equal to Him nor higher than Him."

The Nature of Paramātman

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* and the *Vedāntasūtra* based on it define Brahman as the primary cause of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe.[7] Accordingly, the *Gītā* states that the Supreme Lord is the origin of the universe and its dissolution as well: *ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā.* In an explicit way Lord Kṛṣṇa says that all beings at the end of the cycle enter into *prakṛti* which belongs to Him and they are brought into existence at the beginning of the cycle.

Regarding the sustenance of the universe, the *Gītā* states that the entire universe of sentient beings and non-sentient matter is held together as the rows of gems on a string (*mayi sarvamidam protaṁ sūtre maṇigaṇā iva*).[8]

In a more explicit way, the *Gītā* points out that the Supreme Lord is the seed of all existences (*sarvabhūtānām bījam*) and that there is nothing, moving or unmoving, that can exist without Him (*na tadasti vinā yatsyāt mayā bhūtaṁ carācaram*).[9]

In a significant verse, the *Gītā* says that the entire universe is pervaded by the Lord in an unmanifest form and all beings abide in Him, while He Himself does not abide in them.

mayā tatamidaṁ sarvaṁ jagad avyaktamūrtinā; matsthāni sarva bhūtāni na cā' haṁ teṣu avasthitaḥ.[10]

As we have explained in chapter 9, the implication of this statement is that the Supreme Lord abides in every entity, both sentient and non-sentient, as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) whose presence is not known by them, as pointed out in the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.* It also implies that the Lord is the supporter of all entities which depend on Him for their very existence. In another verse, the *Gītā* says that *Paramātman* abides in the hearts of all beings causing them to turn round by His power as if they were mounted on a machine. The relevant verse reads:

Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛddeśe arjuna tiṣṭhati;
bhrāmāyan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.[11]

It also states that Lord Kṛṣṇa, being seated in the hearts of all, controls even the memory and knowledge as well as their loss (*sarvasya cā' haṁ hṛdi saṁniviṣṭaḥ*).

All these statements bring out the essential characteristic of *Paramātman* or Brahman as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*), as enunciated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.* The Upaniṣad says: *ya ātmani tiṣthan ātmano antaro yamayāti.*[12] "He who dwelling in the self (*jīvātman*), is within the self and controls it." The word *yamayati* signifies that *Paramātman* controls it from within. As explained by the Scriptural text, the significance of the presence of *Paramātman* in the living beings is for the purpose of regulating them from within (*antaḥ praviṣṭaḥ śāstā janānāṁ*).[13]

According to the *Gītā, Paramātman* who is immanent in all the beings as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) is also the transcendent Supreme Being. The *adhyāya* XV which is named *Puruṣottama-yoga,* brings out this transcendent character of God. He is described as *Puruṣottama* or the Supreme Person, since He surpasses both the *kṣara* or perishable and *akṣara* or imperishable. The relevant verses are:[14]

> *dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaras ca akṣara eva ca; kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho akṣara ucyate.*
> There are two persons in this world, the perishable and the imperishable; the perishable is all these beings and the imperishable is the unchanging.
>
> *uttamaḥ puruṣas tv anyaḥ paramātme'ty udāhṛtaḥ; yo lokatrayam āviśya bibharty avyaya īśvaraḥ.*
> But other than these, the Highest Person is called the Supreme Self (*Paramātmā*) who as the undying Lord, enters the three worlds and sustains them.

Though the terms *kṣara puruṣa* and *akṣara puruṣa* are interpreted differently by the commentators,[15] it would be appropriate to regard them as the *baddha jīvas* whose bodies are changing and the *mukta jīvas* or the liberated individual souls which being liberated from the bodies remain unchanging. The Supreme Being who is described as *Puruṣottama* surpasses both. This does not imply that it is a transcendental Reality as some unknowable Godhead beyond human comprehension, because the same verse states that it enters the three worlds and sustains them. The description of the Supreme Self as *Puruṣottama* or Supreme Person, establishes beyond doubt that the Ultimate Reality of the *Gītā* philosophy is a personal God in the name of Vāsudeva or Kṛṣṇa. The concept of *Paramātmā* described as *uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ* rules out the theory of undifferentiated Absolute Self as the Ultimate Reality. The major part of the *adhyāya* dealing with the *vibhūti* or Glory of God and the *adhyāya* presenting a vivid description of the *viśvarūpa* or cosmic form of the Lord also support the theory of Ultimate Reality (*para-tattva*) as the personal God of Religion endowed with infinite attributes, as maintained both by Rāmānuja and Madhva.

The Divine Attributes and Glory

The *Gītā* does not enumerate the various attributes of God in the same manner as the Upaniṣads and Pāñcarātra treatises as well as the Epics do. However, it describes extensively the *vibhūtis* or the glories of the Supreme Lord and in this connection, it also mentions some of the Divine attributes. We shall take note of the important *vibhūtis* that portray the nature of Godhead conceived by the *Gītā.*

According to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the *vibhūti* of *Paramātman* is beyond the comprehension of even the sages and higher celestial deities. Thus He says: "Neither the hosts of celestial beings nor the great sages know my *prabhāva. Prabhāva* means the Lordly power (acc. to S) or the *svaraūpa* and *svabhāva* (acc. to R) or the majesty of the Lord (acc. to M). In whatever sense it is understood, it is immeasurable (*ananta*). If we consider the vivid description of the greatness of the Lord in the *adhyāya* dealing with the *vibhūtis* and the universal form (*viśvarūpa*) revealed to Arjuna, the *vibhūtis* stand for the Divine Glories manifested in the variegated creations of God. In a broad metaphysical sense, the entire universe comprising both the sentient beings and non-sentient entities constitute the Divine *vibhūti* since *Paramātman* as the creator and the Ruler is immanent in them as *antaryāmin* controlling them from within. He is the Self (*ātman*) of all these entities by virtue of His being the controller and sustainer of all. All entities constitute His *śarīra* or body in the metaphysical sense as that which is necessarily controlled and sustained by the *ātman.* This explanation is in accordance with the teaching of the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in which Brahman is stated as the *ātman* related to the universe, which is the *śarīra* in the metaphysical sense.

Thus, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that the entire cosmic universe evolved out of the *prakṛti* or the primordial cosmic matter which is described as *aparā prakṛti* and the totality of all sentient souls described as *parā prakṛti* belong to Him. These are His *vibhūtis* or property since He is the creator of the entire universe (*kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ*) and also the supporter (*matsthāni sarvāni bhūtāni*).

The *Gītā* describes the *vibhūtis* of *Paramātman* by equating Him with all that is considered as the best among the entities in the universe. Thus it is stated by the Lord: "Of the Ādityas (Vedic Gods) I am Viṣṇu, of the luminous bodies, I am the radiant Sun; of the Maruts, I am Marīci; of the stars, I am the moon." In the same strain Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions about Vedas, the celestial deities, Rudras, Vasus, Yakṣas, and Rākṣasas, Gandharvas, great sages, mountains, trees, horses, elephants, cows, snakes, beasts, birds, water creatures, rivers, seasons and months and says that what is regarded as the best of these entities, is Himself.[16]

In another context of explaining the greatness of *Paramātman*, He is regarded as constituting the superb quality or essence of all entities existing in the universe. Thus it is stated: "I am the taste (*rasa*) in the waters, the light in the moon and the sun, the syllable *Om* in all the Vedas, the sound in ether, manhood in men, the pure fragrance in earth, brightness in fire, the life in all existences and the austerity in ascetics."[17]

We have discussed the significance of these statements, as interpreted by the commentators, in chapters 7 and 10. There are similar statements in the Upaniṣads which equate Brahman with the entire universe. Thus says the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*[18]: *sarvam khalu idaṁ brahma*, "Verily, all this is Brahman." The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says: All this is *puruṣa* (*puruṣa eva idam sarvam*).[19] Such equations cannot be taken as identity of the two entities of different character, unless it is established that the universe as such does not exist other than Brahman. Since such a theory is not advocated in the *Gītā*, the plausible explanation of such equation of *Paramātman* with the numerous entities in the universe is that these are the glorious belongings of *Paramātman*. These constitute *aṁśa* or body (*śarīra*) of God in the sense that they are sustained and controlled by Him. The *Gītā* itself supports this view in the following verse:

> *yad-yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā*
> *tad-tad evā avagaccha tvaṁ mama tejoṁśa-saṁbhavam.*[20]
> Whatever being there is endowed with power or splendour or energy, know that to have sprung from a fragment of my power.

Among the Divine attributes, the Rulership or Lordship of *Paramātman* is prominently brought out in the *Gītā*. Thus says the Lord: "I am the father of this world, the mother, the supporter and the grandsire. I am the object of knowledge (*vedyam*), the purifier (*pavitram*)." "I am the goal, the supporter, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend (*suhṛt*).[21] I am the sole protector of all those who worship me with devotion.[22]

The *Paramātman* is also regarded as the very *yajña* or sacrifice. He is also the enjoyer and the Lord of all sacrifices (*sarva yajñānām bhoktā ca prabhuḥ*).[23]

One other Divine quality mentioned in the *Gītā* is that the Supreme Lord is equal to all (*samóham sarvabhūteṣu*). None is hateful or dear to Him. But those who worship Him with devotion, they are in Him and He is also in them.[24]

The most distinctive featutre of Divine glory can be seen in the *viśvarūpa* aspect of *Paramātman.* This is the only religious treatise that describes vividly and comprehensively the universal form of God. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* also describes Brahman conceived as *puruṣa* as the Supreme Person in terms of physical form such as having all faces, all heads, all necks (*sarvānana śiro grīvaḥ*) and as having thousand heads, eyes and feet (*sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt*) and as possessing hands and feet on every side (*sarvataḥ pāṇipādam*), and as having eyes, head and face on every side (*sarvatākṣi śiro mukhaṁ*).[25] But the *Gītā* provides a more vivid description of the universal form of *Paramātman.* Some of the details such as the presence of all celestial deities, sages, etc., in His body, the frightening face with sharp teeth, the swallowing of the warriors of the opposite camp, etc., may appear to be poetic imagery. It may be regarded as an illusory manifestation of God caused by *māyā,* as Śaṁkara explains. But it is not so, since Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself reveals His mysterious form to Arjuna in response to the ardent request of the latter. The Divine Glory seen by Arjuna is real and it represents the infinite character of *Paramātman* (*ananta*), His supreme power (*śakti*) to contain in Him the entire universe of sentient beings and non-sentient entities, His enchanting Personality bedecked with ornaments that attracts the admiration and devotion of the devotees and His all-comprehending spiritual form.

The praiseworthy words expressed by Arjuna in respone to the vision of the *viśvarūpa* of the Lord convey a few important divine attributes. The Lord is the Supreme Being (*paramaṁ*) and the imperishable (*akṣara*). He is the ultimate resting place of the universe (*viśvasya paramaṁ nidhānaṁ*). He is the guardian of the eternal *dharma* (*śāśvata dharmagoptā*). He is the Primal Person (*purāṇa puruṣa*). He is one without a beginning, middle or the end of infinite power (*anādi-madhyāntam ananta vīryam*). He is the devourer of all the worlds in the sense that He is the cause of the dissolution of the universe. In the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa, He is *kāla* (*kalosmi*) and world destroyer (*lokakṣaya-kṛt*), which signifies that *Paramātman* is the cause of both creation and the destruction of the universe.

The hymns of praise addressed to Lord Kṛṣṇa by Arjuna after he was pleased with the vision of the Divine form, convey a few other important attributes of *Paramātman.* He is the first of Gods (*ādideva*), the Primal Person (*puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ*), the Supreme Goal (*paramaṁ dhāma*). The entire universe is pervaded by Him (*viśvam tatam*). He possesses infinite form (*anatarūpa*).

All these details reveal that *Paramātman* or the Supreme Being depicted in the *Gītā* is Brahman as endowed with attributes (*saviśeṣa* or *saguṇa*). We have to examine whether the *Gītā* supports the theory of Brahman as devoid of all determinations (*nirviśeṣa* or *nirguṇa*), as conceived by Śaṁkara.

The Concept of Nirviśeṣa Brahman

The eighth *adhyāya* refers to *akṣara brahma.* In reply to the question raised by Arjuna as what is that *brahma* (*kiṁ tad brahma*), it is stated "*akṣaraṁ brahma paramaṁ.*" (*BG,* VIII.3.) It means that the imperishable is the Supreme Brahman. The word *akṣara* means that which is imperishable (*na kṣarati iti*) and it, prima facie, refers to Brahman, which is imperishable. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* also employs the term *akṣara* to denote Brahman. On the basis of this, Śaṁkara interprets the statement "*akṣaraṁ brahma paramaṁ*" in favour of higher Brahman (*Nirguṇa* Brahman) as distinct from lower Brahman (*Saguṇa* Brahman). Madhva also interprets *akṣara* as the Supreme Brahman but it is not *nirguṇa.*

The term *akṣara* also denotes *jīvātman.* In fact, the *Gītā* itself uses it in the sense of *jīva* (*kuṭastho akṣara ucyate*).[26] The meaning of the term is therefore to be determined with reference to the context in which it is used. As we have explained in chapter 8, the term *akṣara* referred to in the eighth *adhyāya* denotes *jīvātman* in the context of the meditation by the *jijñāsu* or the one who desires to realize the true nature of *jīvātman.* Even if *akṣara* is taken as the higher Brahman (*para brahma*) as conceived by Śaṁkara, it does not imply the undifferentiated Brahman, since the same *akṣara* is described by the Upaniṣad as *praśāsitāra* or the one who possesses the power to command. Hence this verse does not support the theory of higher Brahman.

In the twelfth *adhyāya* dealing with *bhakti-yoga*, mention is made of the meditation on *akṣara* which is described as *avyaya*. A question is raised by Arjuna seeking clarification regarding the relative importance of the two types of devotees viz., those who meditate on *Paramātman* and those who meditate on *akṣara*. The relevant verse reads:

> *evaṁ satatayuktā ye bhaktāḥ tvāṁ paryupāsate*
> *ye cā' pyakṣaram avyaktam teṣāṁ ke yogavittamāh.*[27]
> Those devotees who being thus ever dedicated, meditate on you and those who meditate on the immutable, the unmanifest—of them who have greater knowledge of *yoga*.

This verse is interpreted by Śaṁkara in favour of the theory of two Brahmans viz., the Supreme Self (Brahman), the immutable, which is free from all limitations (*vidhvasta sarvopādhi viśeṣasya*) whose meditation is covered in the *adhyāyas* II-IX and *Paramātman* or the Supreme God endowed with attributes such as omniscience, power, etc., whose meditation is referred to in the eleventh *adhyāya*.

We have discussed this matter in chapter 12. As we have observed there, the *akṣara* described as *avyakta* on which meditation is prescribed does not refer to the undifferentiated Brahman. In the context of the teachings contained in the earlier *adhyāyas* and also in the later verses of twelfth *adhyāya, akṣara* denotes *jīvātman*. This verse cannot be taken to support the theory of two Brahmans.

In the thirteenth *adhyāya* dealing with the subject of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*, one of the verses describes *jñeyaṁ* or that which is to be known in the following words:

> *anādimatparamabrahma na sat tan na asad ucyate.*

According to Śaṁkara, it means: "The Supreme Brahman is beginningless, the word *anādimat* being taken as one word and it is said to be neither existent nor non-existent." The verse is thus interpreted in favour of *Nirguṇa* Brahman. Prima facie, the terms employed to describe the *jñeyam* lend support to this view. Madhva also interprets the verse in favour of Brahman since *kṣetrajña* means for him the Supreme God.

We have discussed the implication of this verse in chapter 13. As explained therein, the term *jñeya* is applicable to *kṣetrajña* or the individual self, which is the subject matter of this *adhyāya*. Accordingly, the compound word *anādimatparamabrahma* is to be read as *anādi matparama brahma* for the reason that *anādimat* as one word is grammatically defective. It would then mean that *jīvātman* (the word *brahma* also denotes *jīva*) is beginningless (*anādi*) and it has *Paramātman* as the Supreme Lord (*matpara*). This explanation offered by Rāmānuja is justified in the context of the *jīvātman* (*kṣetrajña*), which is the subject matter of the *adhyāya*. It is not therefore possible to find support for the theory of higher Brahman on the basis of this verse.

In the fifteenth *adhyāya*, the word *Paramātman* is designated as *uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ* since He transcends both *kṣara puruṣa* and *akṣara puruṣa*. By interpreting the terms *kṣara* as changing universe and *akṣara puruṣa* as unchanging *māyā*, Śaṁkara adopts the view that *uttama puruṣa* who is designated as *paramātmā* is the higher Brahman since it transcends both. But this interpretation would not be tenable since the word *akṣara* with the epithet *puruṣa* cannot mean *māyā*, which is not a *puruṣa*. The *Gītā* describes *akṣara* as *kuṭastha* and it is applicable to the *jīva* in its liberated state when it is free from the association of the perishable bodies. Besides, the word *Paramātmā* in the Upaniṣadic parlance stands for the Supreme Deity. The *Gītā* also does not explicitly mention two Brahmans, as the *Praśna Upaniṣad* states in the context of the meditation on the syllable *Om* (*parama ca aparaṁ ca brahma yad oṁkāraḥ*).[28] Nor is there any verse, which states that Brahman as conditioned by *māyā* is the *Apara* Brahman known as *Īśvara* or personal God. The *Gītā* teaches that due to ignorance which eclipses one's *jñāna*; one may not know the true nature of the Supreme Lord (*mohitam nābhijānāti māṁ*).[29] But there is no mention that Brahman due to its association with *māyā* becomes *Apara* Brahman or *Īśvara*. The description of *ātman* as unmanifest, unthinkable and unchanging does not necessarily imply the concept of *Nirviśeṣa* Brahman, as claimed by the Advaitin. These epithets, as interpreted by Madhva, can as well apply to the Supreme Lord who is *saviśeṣa* or to the *jīvātman*, as interpreted by Rāmānuja.

Thus, it may be observed from the foregoing analysis of the teachings about the *Paramātman*, that the Ultimate Reality, according to the *Gītā*, is Brahman as endowed with attributes and not one devoid of attributes. This Reality is the personal God of Religion in the name of Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva and also known as

Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu in the Upaniṣad. The *Gītā* does not speak of any other higher Reality as *Para* Brahman devoid of all characteristics (*nirviśeṣa*). Whether or not *Paramātmā* or the Supreme Self is the same as the *jīvātman* is a different issue and will be examined in the subsequent section on the theory of *jīvātman.*

II. THE DOCTRINE OF *JĪVĀTMAN*

The *Bhagavadgītā* admits *jīvātman* as a separate ontological entity other than *Paramātman.* This is evident from the fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa who is regarded as the *Paramātman* imparts the philosophical teachings to Arjuna as an individual seeking spiritual enlightenment. The need for the teaching about the nature of *jīvātman* arises for more than one reason. Arjuna is overtaken by grief and compassion at the thought of killing his kith and kin in the battle, due to the delusion of the physical body itself as the soul. In order to overcome it, he was required to be instructed that the *jīvātman* is eternal (*nitya*) and indestructible as contrasted to the perishable body. The central theme of the *Gītā* is *sādhana,* which involves the observance of *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga.* This also needed a detailed knowledge of the true nature of *jīvātman* who is the spiritual aspirant for *mokṣa.* The Supreme Goal, according to the *Gītā,* is the attainment of *Paramātman* and this necessarily presupposes the knowledge of the *jīva* and also of *Paramātman* who is the object of attainment. There is no suggestion anywhere in the *Gītā* that the distinction between *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* is to be admitted for practical purposes from the empirical point of view but in reality, the two are identical from the transcendental stand point. We shall discuss this matter later in connection with the relation of *jīva* to *Paramātman.* We may first take note of the nature of *jīvātman* as enunciated in the *Gītā.*

The Nature of Jīvātman

The word generally used in the *Gītā* to denote *jīvātman* is *ātman.* The term *ātman* in Vedānta also denotes *Paramātman* or the Supreme Self as different from *jīvātman* or the individual self. Though *ātman* in its primary sense stands for Brahman, it also refers to *jīvātman.* The correct import is to be determined with reference to the context in which it is employed. The other words, which are employed in the *Gītā* to denote *jīvātman,* are *sāṁkhya, puruṣa, brahma, akṣara, kṣetrajña,* and *parā prakṛti.* All these terms bear more than one meaning. The commentators also have interpreted them differently in accordance with the doctrines advanced by them. However, if we take into consideration the context in which they are employed, all these terms also denote *jīva-tattva.*

The second *adhyāya* is primarily devoted to the exposition of the nature of *jīvātman.* In fact, this is the first philosophical teaching imparted to Arjuna by Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is named as Sāṁkhya or the theory of *ātman,* as is stated in the verse *eṣā te abhihitā sāṁkhye*[30] which means that so far (from vv.12-30) the theory of *sāṁkhya* or *ātma tattva* is taught to Arjuna. In the context of the need to remove the delusion of the body itself as soul the word *ātman* denotes *jīvātman* and not *Paramātman.* According to these verses, *jīvātman* is *nitya* or eternal. Lord Kṛṣṇa affirms the eternality of *jīva* by citing the example of God whose existence at all times—past, present and future—is not in doubt.[31] This view is further substantiated by repeatedly pointing out the indestructible character (*avināśitva*) of the *jīva* as contrasted with the destructible nature of the physical body (*vināśa svabhāva*). Thus it is stated: "Know that by which all this is pervaded is indestructible (*avināśī*)."[32] "The bodies of the eternal souls come to an end (*antavanta ime dehāḥ*)." According to the *Kaṭhopaniṣad,* which is reiterated in the *Gītā,* the self is never born nor does it die at any time (*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit*).[33] It is unborn (*aja*), permanent (*nitya*) and primeval (*purāṇa*). It is not slain even when the body is slain. In a more specific way, the *Gītā* says that the self is *nitya* or eternal, *sarvagata* or all-pervading in the sense that it is capable of entering and abiding in all bodies, *sthāṇuḥ* or unchanging and *acala* or immovable. It is the same for ever (*sanātanaḥ*).[34] Some of these descriptions such as *nitya, sarvagata, avikārī,* etc., may also be applicable to *Paramātman* but in the context of teaching Arjuna about the difference between the perishable body and imperishable *jīva,* the reference to *jīvātman* is more relevant. The comparison of the body to the worn out garment, the mention of the physical change that the body undergoes from childhood to youth and old age and the possibility of its being affected by heat, cold, pleasure and pain are all intended to emphasize the perishable character of the body constituted of five physical elements with reference to the imperishable character of *jīvātman.*

The *Gītā* acknowledges two kinds of *jīva.* These are *baddha jīvas* or the souls in bondage and *muktas* or the souls liberated from bondage. The *baddha jīva* is associated with a physical body, which is subject to modification. The *mukta,* which is totally liberated from bondage is devoid of material body. Both kinds of *jīvas* are, however, eternal in nature and constituted of knowledge (*jñāna-svarūpa*). How bondage is caused and how it is overcome would be explained later.

According to the *Gītā,* the *jīvas* are infinite in number. At the commencement of the philosophical teaching in the second *adhyāya* about the nature of the *jīvātman* as *nitya,* Lord Kṛṣṇa uses the expressions "*ime janādhipāḥ,*" and "*sarve vayam*" in plural which convey the idea that the individual selves are many and that they are also different from *Paramātman.* It is possible to explain this plurality with reference to the bodies, which are many (*dehabhedānuvṛttyā*), as Śaṁkara interprets, on the basis of the Advaita doctrine of *jīvas* as empirical egos, that is, Brahman as conditioned by the internal organs (*antaḥkaraṇas*). But the *Gītā* does not mention such a theory of *jīva.* Besides, Lord Kṛṣṇa who is omniscient would not be teaching to Arjuna about the nature of the conditioned selves, which are illusory in character being caused by *māyā.* The *Kaṭhopaniṣad* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* state: "Eternal among the eternals, the sentient among the sentients, the one Supreme Being fulfils the desires of the many."[35] This statement conveys that the *jīvas* are not only eternal but also many and different from *Paramātman.* Based on the Upaniṣadic texts, the *Vedāntasūtra* also affirms the eternality (*nityatva*) of the *jīvas.* Wherever the *Gītā* refers to the *jīvātman,* whether it be in connection with the observance of *karma-yoga,* or *jñāna-yoga* or the attainment of *Paramātman* through *bhakti-yoga,* it means *jīvātman* as a separate, real spiritual ontological entity and not the empirical conditioned self. The empirical ego is not *nitya, aja, avināśī,* and *sarvagata.*

The thirteenth *adhyāya* which mainly deals with the theory of *kṣetra* or body and *kṣetrajña* or the knower of the body mentions a few important characteristics of *jīvātman.* The term *kṣetrajña* as defined in the opening verse of this *adhyāya,* denotes *jīvātman* who is the knower of the body (*etad yo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetrajña iti*). The term *kṣetrajña* is also applicable to *Paramātman.* The equation of *jīvātman* with *Paramātman* in the second verse (*kṣetrajñaṁ cā' pi māṁ viddhi*) and also a few descriptions of *kṣetrajña* as *parama brahma,* as *maheśvara, paramātmā,* etc., in the later verses, prima facie, lend support to this view. But as we have discussed in chapter 13, the main subject-matter of this *adhyāya* is the theory of body and self and in this context, *kṣetrajña* denotes *jīvātman.*

Among the characteristics of *jīva* mentioned in this *adhyāya,* it is stated that *jīva* is *anādi,* which means that it has no beginning. That which has no origin does not also have an end. This conforms to the Upaniṣadic teaching, which says that *jīva* is not born, nor does it die. It is described as "*matparama brahma.*" It means that *jīva* (the word *brahma* taken as *jīva*) has *Paramātman* as the Supreme Lord (*aham paro yasya tad mat parama*). This interpretation offered by Rāmānuja is in accordance with what is taught in the seventh *adhyāya,* where it is stated that *jīva* is the *parā prakṛti* of the Supreme Being (*apareyam itastvanyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parāṁ*).[36] As compared to the *aparā prakṛti,* which is the non-sentient *prakṛti, parā prakṛti* cannot be either *Īśvara,* as Śaṁkara interprets nor the *cit-prakṛti* or Goddess Lakṣmī, as Madhva maintains but it is the sentient *jīvātman.* Whether or not the *jīva* is essentially the same as Brahman is a separate issue and it will be discussed later when we consider the relation of *jīva* to *Paramātman.*

The *kṣterajña* or the *jīvātman* as the knower of the *kṣetra* or the body (*śarīra*) is a sentient being (*centana* entity). It implies that it is constituted of knowledge (*jñāna-svarūpa*) and also possesses *jñāna* as a *dharma* or attribute, as otherwise it cannot have the capacity of cognition or awareness of objects. The *Gītā* therefore uses the term *puruṣa* to denote the *jīvātman,* corresponding to the concept of *puruṣa* in the Sāṁkhya system. It is *anādi* or beginningless like the *prakṛti.*[37] It is described as *upadraṣṭā,* which means that it is the seer or one who sees the objects through the media of knowledge (acc. to R) or mind. The *Praśna Upaniṣad* also states that *jīva* is *draṣṭā* or seer, *boddhā* or knower, etc.[38] It is also *bhoktā* or the experiencer of the pleasure and pain. The *Gītā* also states that *puruṣa* experiences pleasure and pain.

Jīva as Kartā

According to the Upaniṣad, the *jīvātman* is the *kartā* or the agent of action. The *Vedāntasūtra* states that *jīva* is to be admitted as *kartā* since the command of the Sacred texts to observe a prescribed act or refrain from what is prohibited becomes meaningful (*kartā śāstrārthavatvāt*). In other words, the Vedic command is meaningful only in respect of one who is an agent of action. The *Gītā* also admits *kartṛtva* for the *jīva,* if the verses bearing on this subject are properly interpreted. The observance of *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* by the seeker of *mokṣa* for attaining the Supreme Goal is possible if only the *jīva* had the freedom and the mental and physical capacity to function. But there are few verses in the *Gītā* which give the impression that *ātman* is not really the agent of action and that the doership belongs to the *prakṛti*, or the physical body constituted of three *guṇas—sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. Thus, it is stated: *prakṛti* is said to be the cause of the body and the sense organs, which serve as the basis for activities. *Puruṣa* is said to be the experiencer of pleasure and pain.[39] In another context, the *Gītā* says: "All actions are being caused by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. The person clouded with ignorance thinks "I am the doer."[40] These teachings of the *Gītā* appear to be in conflict with the teaching of the *Vedāntasūtra*. But this is not so. The *Gītā* itself resolves this apparent conflict. As explained by Rāmānuja, what is meant by these verses is that *jīva* caught up in bondage functions under the influence of the *guṇas*. Though *jīva* is primarily the agent of action, it can act only when it is associated with a body, mind and the sense organs, while in the absence of these it does not function. In view of this fact, greater emphasis is laid on the influence of the *guṇas* of which the body, mind, and the sense organs are constituted. Keeping this truth in mind, it is stated explicitly in the *Gītā*[41] that there are five factors which are responsible for all action: the body (*adhiṣṭhāna*), the agent (*kartā*), the different sense organs (*karaṇa*), the fivefold breath and their modifications (*vividhā ceṣṭā*) and lastly *Īśvara* (*daivam*). Though *Īśvara* is regarded as an important causal factor for action of an individual because He is the controller of the human souls, equal importance is given to the *kartṛtva* of the *jīva*. There is no mention in the *Gītā* that this *kartṛtva* belongs to the *antaḥkaraṇa* or the internal organ caused by *māyā* and it is superimposed on the *jīvātman* out of ignorance and that *ātman* is *akartā* or devoid of agency. This view is based on the Advaita doctrine of *jīvātman* as essentially Brahman which is pure consciousness and undifferentiated and which due to its conjunction with the internal organ is regarded falsely as *kartā*. But such a theory is not reflected in the verses of the *Gītā*.

Nor does the *Gītā* explicitly mention that *jīva* is a *pratibimba* of *Paramātman* who is the *bimba* and that the primary agency (*pradhāna kartṛtva*) belongs to Viṣṇu, while *jīva* as his *pratibimba* only acts under the impulsion of *Īśvara*. If this be admitted, it would follow that the action and its result belong to *Paramātman.* But according to the *Vedāntasūtra, jīva* is *kartā* in the primary (proper) sense of the term, even though the power to function is endowed by *Īśvara.*

In one of the verses, it is stated that the *jīvātman* described as the Lord of the body does not create either the *kartṛtva* or *karma* (*na kartṛtvam na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ*).[42] Prima facie, this verse appears to deny *kartṛtva* to *jīva.* But this is not so as it would conflict with the teaching of the *Vedāntasūtra* and also the *Gītā* which admits *kartṛtva* for *jīva.* The implication of the above verse (V.14), as explained by Rāmānuja, is that *kartṛtva* in the form of *puṇya pāpa rūpa karma* is not applicable to the *jīva* in its true nature. As the *jīva* in its true form is free from the influence of *karma* (*akarma vaśya*), it does not have *kartṛtva* caused by *karma* in the form of *puṇya* and *pāpa.* When the *jīva* is associated with the physical body and organs, it functions as the *kartā* being influenced by the *vāsanās* or innate tendencies of the previous births. It does not therefore imply that *jīva* is not *kartā. Kartṛtva* like *jñātṛtva* is the intrinsic nature of *jīva* even though it is endowed by *Īśvara.* Even in the state of *mukti, jīva* does not lose this capacity since it can function in that state through its free will (*saṁkalpa*), as pointed out in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and the *Vedāntasūtra* based on it (*svābhāvikam kartṛtvam muktāvasthyāyām api nāpaiti*).[43]

Jīva and Bondage

As pointed out earlier, there are two kinds of *jīva* viz.,*baddha* and *mukta.* The *baddha jīva* is entangled with bondage in the form of continuous cycle of births and deaths from a beginningless time due to the influence of *karma* or the past deeds of an individual. The *jīva* in bondage is associated with the physical body. As *karma* is variegated in character, the lives that the individual souls assume with physical bodies are of various types ranging from the highest being such as *Caturmukha* Brahmā to the lowest living organism such as a germ. It is only on the basis of the nature of the body with which a *jīva* is associated that a distinction is made between one individual self and another. But as far as the intrinsic nature is concerned, they are all the same. That is, all *jīvas* are constituted of knowledge (*jñāna-svarūpa*), blissful (*ānanda*) and pure (*amala*). They are all eternal (*nitya*) and imperishable (*avināśī*). We shall later explain how bondage is caused. For the present it may be noted that the embodied *jīva* assumes many forms on account of its good and bad deeds of the past lives. As long as the *jīva* is bound, it continues to pass through the numerous births and deaths until it is finally liberated from bondage by following the prescribed discipline (*sādhana*). The *Gītā* says: "From the realm of Brahmā downwards, all living beings are subject to return to rebirth, but on attaining *Paramātman*, there is no return to birth again. Such a liberated *jīva* is regarded as *mukta*.

According to the *Gītā*, the physical body and the senses including the mind which are the products of *prakṛti* with which the *jīva* is associated cause bondage to the soul. The *prakṛti* is constituted of the three *guṇas* viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* has the quality of intelligence (*prakāśa*), *rajas* possesses the quality of movement (*pravṛtti*) and *tamas* is characterized by inertia and indifference (*pramāda*). These are the inherent qualities of *prakṛti*. The body, the sense organs and the mind, being the products of *prakṛti* are also constituted of these *guṇas*. These bind the *jīva* which dwells in the body.[44]

The *Gītā* also describes what these *guṇas* are and the manner in which they cause the future births in different forms and how one can get redeemed of the influence of the *guṇas* leading to liberation from bondage. These details are furnished in chapter 14. The nature of bondage and the attainment of liberation from it will be considered in chapter on *parama-puruṣārtha*.

The Jīva as free from Bondage

Regarding the liberated *jīva*, there are a few verses in the *Gītā* which briefly refer to their nature. While explaining the concept of the Supreme Person (*Puruṣottama*), the *Gītā* states that there are two types of *puruṣa* in the universe known as *kṣara* and *akṣara*. As observed in chapter 15, the term *akṣara* along with the epithet *puruṣa* refers to the *mukta jīva* or souls which are totally dissociated with the perishable bodies. The *Gītā* therefore describes *akṣara* as *kūṭastha* or that which remains unchanging.[45]

The *Gītā* often uses the term *akṣara* to denote *jīvātman* in its true form as totally devoid of physical body (*prakṛtivinirmukta ātma-svarūpam*). Thus in the eighth *adhyāya*, in reply to the question as to what is that *brahma*, the term *brahma* is described as "*akṣaram paramaṁ brahma*."[46] As explained in chapter 8, *akṣara* in the context of the meditation by the aspirant seeking *kaivalya* (*jijñāsu*) denotes *jīvātman* in its true nature. Again in the *adhyāya* XII, the *Gītā* refers to two types of meditation viz., one on *Paramātman* with unswerving devotion and the second on the pure self (*akṣaropāsanā*).[47] As we have explained in chapter 12, the term *akṣara* referred to in this verse does not refer either to *Nirguṇa* Brahman, as Śaṁkara states or to the Goddess Lakṣmī, as Madhva interprets. It refers to the *jīvātman* in its true form which is the object of meditation for the *jijñāsu.* This is evident from the verse, which states that those who attain *akṣara* do not return to bondage (*yaṁ prāpya na nivarante*).[48] The *Sāṁkhya-yoga* system also admits that the realization of the individual self named as *puruṣa* is the Supreme Goal.The Pātañjala-yoga has laid down the eightfold discipline to attain the true state of the self named as *kaivalya.* The *Gītā* also has prescribed the same type of discipline in the sixth *adhyāya* for the observance of *jñāna-yoga,* also named as *dhyāna-yoga* and *samādhi-yoga* for the realization of the true nature of the self. In the absence of meditation on *Paramātman* in the sixth *adhyāya* is an explicit manner, the goal of attainment of *jñāna-yoga* is *jīvātman* in its true nature.

In connection with the description of *jīvātman* (*kṣetrajña*) as the goal of attainment (*jñeyam*), the *Gītā* describes it as *matparaṁ brahma.* As pointed out in chapter 13, the term *brahma* in the context of the nature of *kṣetrajña* refers to *jīvātman* and it is regarded as *matparaṁ,* which means that it has *Paramātman* as its Supreme Lord (*ahaṁ paro yasya tat matparam*). This description signifies that *jīva* is the *śarīra* or body of *Paramātman* in the sense that it is intimately related to the Lord by virtue of His being the indwelling Self (*antaryāmin*), as declared in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.*[49]

The *muktātmā,* according to the *Gītā,* attains a state similar to that of *Paramātman* (*sādharmya*). We shall deal with this subject in the chapter on *Parama-puruṣārtha.*

The Relation of Jīvātman to Paramātman

This is an important subject in Vedānta and we may take note of what the *Gītā* says about it. The main issue to be considered is whether *jīvātman* is essentially Brahman implying non-difference between the two (*tādātmya*) or are they two distinct realities. As we have pointed out earlier, the *Bhagavadgītā* throughout conveys the idea that *jīva-tattva* is distinct from *Paramātman.* The very first philosophical teaching in the second *adhyāya* (v.12) draws a distinction between *jīva* and Brahman. Lord Kṛṣṇa as the teacher and Arjuna as the devoted pupil seeking spiritual enlightenment presupposes the distinction between *Paramātman* and *jīvātman*. The observance of *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* involving loving meditation on *Paramātman*, the attainment of *Paramātman* as the Supreme Goal and the description of the higher status in terms of *sādharmya* or equality with Brahman, all are meaningful if *jīvātman* as the seeker of *mokṣa* and *Paramātman* as the object of attainment are really different. There is no explicit mention in the *Gītā* that the *jīva* is essentially Brahman, implying that they are non-different. Nor do we come across any verse in which it is said that *jīva* is Brahman as conditioned by the limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*) in the form of body and *antaḥkaraṇa* caused by *māyā* or *avidyā*, similar to the all-pervasive *ākāśa*, when conditioned by several receptacles, appears to be many. Nor does the *Gītā* refer to the theory that the *jīvas* are the reflections of Brahman in the several *antaḥkaraṇas*, similar to the reflections of one sun in several waves of water. On the contrary, the *Gītā* explicitly states that *jīvas* are *aṁśa* or integral part of *Paramātman* (*mamaivāṁśo jīvaloke*).[50] In another context, *jīvas* are described as *parā prakṛti* of the Supreme Lord as contrasted to the non-sentient cosmic matter described as *aparā prakṛti*. Both of them belong to *Paramātman* and they have their origin in Him and are also controlled and sustained by Him. Besides, *Paramātman* indwells in the *jīvātman* as its Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*), as declared by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. The *Gītā* also says that the Lord abides in the hearts of all beings causing them to turn round by His power as if mounted on a machine.[51] The immanence of *Paramātman* in the individual self also establishes the difference between the *jīvātman* and *Paramātman*. The *jīvas* which are inherently related to *Paramātman* cannot be illusory manifestation of Brahman conditioned by the limiting adjuncts caused by *māyā*.

However, there is one verse in the entire *Gītā* which speaks of the relation of *jīva* described as *kṣetrajña* to *Paramātman*. In the *adhyāya* XIII dealing with the theory of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*, Lord Kṛṣṇa in response to the query of Arjuna, first defines the terms *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*. *Kṣetra* is stated as the physical body (*śarīra*) and *kṣetrajña* as the knower of the body. Next He says: "*kṣetrajñaṁ cā'pi māṁ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata.*"[52] It means: "Know Me also as the knower of the field in all fields." The verse as it reads conveys the idea of oneness or non-difference between *kṣetrajña* taken as the individual self who abides in all the bodies and *Paramātman* denoted by the word *māṁ*. In fact Śaṁkara interprets it in favour of the

Advaita doctrine of non-difference between *jīva* and Brahman.

We have discussed this matter in detail in chapter 13. As observed therein, *kṣetrajña* as *jīvātman* cannot be regarded as identical with *Paramātman* since the two ontological entities are of different nature. There are several Upaniṣadic texts which speak of difference between the two. If it is established that *jīvas* are conditioned selves or the empirical egos caused by *māyā*, it may be possible to uphold the identity (*tādātmya*) of *jīva* and Brahman. But such a theory is not mentioned in the *Gītā*. Hence, the plausible explanation for oneness of *kṣetrajña* and *Paramātman* is to regard that the *jīvas* are ensouled by *Paramātman* (*madātmaka*). This interpretation offered by Rāmānuja is supported by the Antryāmī Brāhmaṇa of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which declares that Brahman is immanent in the *jīvas* as *antaryāmin*. *Paramātman* as inherently related to the *jīva* is one as a *viśiṣṭa* entity. This view is also epistemologically justified, since a substance as related to its essential attribute is one, while the attribute and the substrate in which it inheres are different by virtue of their intrinsic nature. It is in this sense that the *jīva* is regarded as *aṁśa* of Brahman in the *Vedāntasūtra* and also by the *Gītā*. The concept of *aṁśa* taken in the sense of essential attribute of the *viśiṣṭa* substance accounts for both difference and non-difference between *jīva* and Brahman, as implied in the *Vedāntasūtra*.[53] Thus, the *Gītā* does not advocate the absolute non-difference (*kevala abheda*) between *jīvātman* and *Paramātman*. We shall discuss the merit of this theory in the chapter on General Evaluation.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF THE UNIVERSE

The *Bhagavadgītā* acknowledges three distinct ontological entities (*tattvas*) namely, *Paramātman*, or the Supreme Being, the *jīvātman*, or the individual self, and *prakṛti*, or the primordial cosmic matter. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* also mentions the three *tattvas* as *bhoktā* or the individual who experiences, *bhogya* or the cosmic matter which is the object of experience and *preritārā* or *Īśvara* who is the controller of both.[54] The *Gītā* describes the non-sentient *prakṛti* as *aparā prakṛti* as distinct from the *jīvas* named as *parā prakṛti* and states that both belong to *Paramātman* who is their origin (*yoni*).[55] It is also designated as *mahat brahma*, the word *brahma* being understood as *prakṛti*, which is under the control of *Paramātman*.[56]

The *Gītā* devotes greater attention to the discussion of *prakṛti* and its evolutes and in particular, the three *guṇas* namely *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* of which *prakṛti* is constituted, since the knowledge of this subject is considered important for understanding the human bondage and its removal. It therefore deals briefly with the subject of the origin of the universe, its ontological status in terms of its relation to *Paramātman* and the theory of *māyā*. We shall present in this chapter the available details about the theory of the universe.

The Origin of the Universe

According to the *Gītā, Paramātman* is the origin of the universe (*jagat*). In accordance with the teaching of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, which defines Brahman as the primary cause of the origin, sustenance and dissolution of the universe,[57] the *Gītā* states that Lord Kṛṣṇa is both the origin and dissolution of the entire universe (*aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā*).[58] The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* describes Brahman as *bhūta-yoni* or the source of all beings. The same idea is expressed by the *Gītā* which says: "Know that all beings have their birth in this (the *parā* and *aparā prakṛtis*) which belong to Me."[59] The universe is brought into existence through the *prakṛti* which is made to evolve into the variegated universe. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa: "All beings enter into *prakṛti* at the end of the cycle, and at the beginning of the next cycle, I send them forth." "By controlling the *prakṛti* which is My own, I send forth again and again all this multitude of beings.[60] According to these teachings, *Paramātman* as the material cause of the universe does not transform Himself into the universe but He creates it out of His will through the media of *prakṛti*, which is made to evolve into the universe. This is made evident by the statement "Under my guidance, *prakṛti* gives birth to all things, moving and unmoving (*mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa carācaram*)."[61] The expression *mayā adhyakṣeṇa* implies that out of His *saṁkalpa* or *īkṣaṇa* the causation of the universe is effected through *prakṛti*.

In another context, Lord Kṛṣṇa states that *prakṛti* described as *mahat brahma* is my *yoni* (womb) and in that I cast the seed and from it all beings take birth.[62] As we have discussed in chapter 14, the implication of this statement is that the Supreme Lord who is the primary cause of the universe causes the association of sentient souls with the non-sentient bodies. From such a conjunction between the two which is brought about by the will of *Paramātman*, all the beings from *Caturmukha* Brahmā down to tuft of the grass are born. Thus according to the *Gītā*, the universe comprises both the moving beings and the non-sentient entities.

The process of evolution of *prakṛti* into its various modifications does not find any mention in the *Gītā*. It is merely stated that the *aparā prakṛti* is eightfold (*aṣṭadhā*). That is, it is divided into eight evolutes. These are earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, *buddhi* and *ahaṁkāra*. These represent the twenty-three evolutes acknowledged by the Sāṁkhya system. The *Gītā* enumerates all these evolutes of *prakṛti* viz., *ahaṁkāra, buddhi,* the ten sense organs, mind, five objects of senses and the five gross physical elements.[63]

Regarding the nature of *prakṛti,* the *Gītā* says that it is *triguṇātmika.* That is, it is constituted of three *guṇas,* namely, *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* What these *guṇas* are and how they influence the human activities will be considered separately. For the present, it may be noted that as in the Sāṁkhya system, the *Gītā* also admits that all the evolutes of *prakṛti* including the sense organs and mind and also the non-sentient entities in the universe are constituted of three *guṇas* in varying degrees. An entire *adhyāya* in the *Gītā* named as *Guṇatraya-vibhāga-yoga* is devoted to this subject.

The Theory of Māyā

The most significant feature of *prakṛti* as mentioned in the *Gītā* is that it is regarded as *māyā* of *Paramātman.* The relevant verse reads: *daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā.*[64] "This divine *māyā* of mine consisting of the *guṇas* is hard to overcome." The description of *māyā* as consisting of three *guṇas* signifies that it is the non-sentient *prakṛti* or the primordial cosmic matter. It is divine since it belongs to *Paramātman.* The commentators have interpreted the term *māyā* differently. According to Śaṁkara, it refers to cosmic principle of illusion whose nature is indescribable (*anirvacanīya*). It is illusory in character (*mithyā*). If this explanation is accepted, it would follow that the universe, which is its product is also illusory (*mithyā*). If, on the other hand, it is regarded as the *śakti* or power of *Īśvara* capable of producing the variegated universe, as interpreted by Rāmānuja and Madhva, then it is not illusory but a real ontological entity and hence the universe which is brought into existence through it is also real. We have discussed this matter in chapter 7 and as we have observed there, *māyā* which is equated with *prakṛti* constituted of three *guṇas* cannot be the cosmic principle of illusion, as conceived by Śaṁkara. It is non-sentient entity, which is real and distinct from *Paramātman.* The *Gītā* does not suggest that either the universe or even the *prakṛti,* which is its material cause, is illusory. Nowhere in the *Gīta* there is any mention of *avidyā* or *māyā* in the sense understood by the Advaita Vedānta. Even the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* which mentions the term *māyā* as *prakṛti* (*māyāntu prakṛtim vidyāt māyinaṁ tu maheśvaram*)[65] does not imply that it is illusory. The same Upaniṣad also states that the sages have seen through *dhyāna-yoga* the *devātma śakti* or divine power hidden in three *guṇas* as the cause of the universe.[66] Presumably in the same sense the *Gītā* describes *prakṛti* consisting of three *guṇas* as *daivī-māyā* or the divine power. Śakti, which is an attribute, should necessarily inhere in *Paramātman* who is the *śaktimān* or *māyin,* as *Śvetāśvatara* states. On the basis of these facts, it cannot be said that *māyā* equated with *prakṛti* is an illusory principle but it is a real enity belonging to *Paramātman* through which the variegated universe is caused.

The *Gītā* also uses the word *māyā* in two other contexts. While explaining the significance of *avatāra,* Lord Kṛṣṇa says: "I am born out of my own *māyā*" (*sambhavāmi ātma māyayā*). Here *māyā* means the *saṁkalpa-jñāna* or the free will of the Lord since the incarnated form of God is a real manifestation for the specific purpose of protection of the pious and destruction of the wicked, as explained in the *Gītā.* Again in the eighteenth *adhyāya,* it is stated that the Lord abides in the hearts of all beings causing them to turn round by His *māyā* as if they were mounted on a machine. In this context, the word *māyā* refers to His supreme power by which He controls every being. *Māyā* is also used in the sense of *ajñāna* or ignorance, which eclipses true nature of *Paramātman* (*māyāya apahṛtajñāna*). The word *ajñāna* does not imply the illusory principle but the absence of knowledge. Thus, the theory of *māyā,* as conceived by Advaita Vedānta, does not figure in the *Gītā.*

The Ontological Status of the Universe

In the absence the doctrine of *māyā* as conceived by Advaita Vedānta, does the *Gītā* uphold that the universe which is brought into existence by the will of *Paramātman* through the evolution of the *prakṛti* is illusory manifestation of Brahman caused by *māyā,* as claimed by the Advaitin. The *Gītā* verses do not explicitly mention that the universe is illusory in character. Nor do they deny its reality. In fact, the vivid narration of all entities in the universe as the *vibhūtis* or glories of *Paramātman* affirm its reality. The *Gītā* states specifically that the entire universe represents a fragment of the power of *Paramātman* (*mama tejoṁśa*). The scriptural text says that the material universe is only one-fourth of the Supreme Person (*pādosya viśvābhūtāni*). However, a few verses in the *Gītā* which emphasise that the entire universe owes its existence to *Paramātman* may be construed in favour of the non-existence of the universe apart from the Supreme Being. Lord Kṛṣṇa says: *mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ jagad avyakta mūrtinā; matsthāni sarvābhūtāni na ca' haṁ teṣu avasthitaḥ.* "By Me all this universe is pervaded through my unmanifested form. All beings abide in Me but I do not abide in them."[67]

This statement that all beings exist in Brahman is interpreted by Śaṁkara to imply that apart from Brahman they do not really exist (*matsthāni māyā ātmanā ātmatvena avasthitam*). In other words, the universe does not exist other than Brahman. As we have explained in chapter 9, this interpretation is not sustainable. The fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa says that the entire universe is pervaded by Him and that the former abides in Him does not imply the illusory character of the universe. The implication of this verse, as pointed out by Rāmānuja, is that *Paramātman* abides in all entities as the *antaryāmin* and that all entities are dependent on Him for their sustenance. All the entities in the universe are always sustained and controlled by *Paramātman* and in view of it, they are regarded as His *śarīra* in the metaphysical sense.

In another verse, it is stated that all that exists in the universe is strung on *Paramātman* as rows of gems on a string (*mayi sarvamidaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇigaṇā iva*).[68] This statement emphasizes the dependence of all sentient and non-sentient beings on *Paramātman* who is the sustainer and controller of them. There is no suggestion that the manifold universe is superimposed on Brahman. The illustration of the thread and gems strung on it conveys that the universe depends on *Paramātman* for its existence.

The ontological relationship between the universe and *Paramātman* is an important subject in the Vedānta. The issue involved is whether the two ontological entities are distinct (*bheda*) or whether they are non-different (*abheda*). This question arises because the Upaniṣads equate Brahman with the universe. Thus states *Chāndogya*[69]: "Verily, all this is Brahman" (*sarvam khalvidam brahma*). The *Śvetāśvatara* says: "All this is only Puruṣa" (*puruṣa evedam sarvam*).[70] There are numerous statements in the *Gītā* which equate *Paramātman* with several entities in the universe. Thus says

Lord Kṛṣṇa: "I am the taste in the water." "I am the light in the moon and the sun." "I am the sound in the ether." In describing the universal form (*viśvarūpa*) of *Paramātman*, the *Gītā* also says that He is everything in the universe.[71] Two ontological entities of different natures cannot be regarded as identical. It may be possible to explain the equation of universe with *Paramātman* by denying the reality of the universe. That is, the universe as such does not really exist but it appears to exist due to *avidyā* or the ignorance of the true nature of Brahman. When *avidyā* is removed by true knowledge of Brahman, the appearance of the universe ceases to exist. From the standpoint of the Ultimate Reality, universe is spoken as identical with Brahman but from an empirical point of view the universe exists. This is the explanation advanced by Advaita Vedānta.

As we have observed earlier, the *Gītā* verses do not mention that the universe is an illusory manifestation of the Supreme Being. Nor do they support the concept of *māyā*, as conceived by Advaita Vedānta, on the basis of which it may be possible to account for the appearance of Brahman as universe. The equation of Brahman with the universe cannot therefore be explained by the denial of the reality of the universe. The universe is real since it is brought into existence by the will of God and it also constitutes His Glory. Its equation with *Paramātman* needs to be understood in a different way.

The other plausible explanation for this equation is to regard all things in the universe as inherently related to *Paramātman* since they are sustained by Him and also controlled by Him as their *antaryāmin*. Though *Paramātman* and the universe are different by virtue of their intrinsic nature, they are one as inherently related, as in the case of the body and soul of an individual. This is the explanation adopted by Rāmānuja. The Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* lends support to this view. Brahman indwells in all entities and the latter are regarded as *śarīra* of Brahman in the metaphysical sense as being controlled and sustained by Him. The *Gītā* also upholds this theory. In an explicit way, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that He abides in the hearts of all beings and controls them (*īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛddeśe Arjuna tiṣṭhati, brāhmayan sarvabhūtāni*). In another context He says: "I support this entire universe by pervading it with a single fraction of my power (*viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat*). While discussing the nature of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

"kṣetrajñam cā'pi māṁ viddhi." If the implication of this statement is correctly understood, as explained by Rāmānuja, with due regard to the context and also the teaching of the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa, both the *kṣetrajña* or the *jīvas* and *kṣetra* or the universe are ensouled by *Paramātman.* All these statements convey that there is an intimate relationship between *Paramātman* and the universe including the sentient beings, which justifies the equation of *Paramātman* and all that exists in the universe referred to in the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads.

Thus, the *Gītā* presents a realistic theory of the universe, which is the *vibhūti* of the Supreme Lord. The idea of its being illusory manifestation of Brahman caused by *māyā* is not reflected in the *Gītā.*

REFERENCES

1. *BG,* X.12-13
2. Ibid., IV.6-8. See also *supra,* ch. 4, pp. 31-32.
3. *Tait. Āraṇyaka,* III.12.
4. *BG,* VII.7.
5. Ibid., XI.43.
6. *Śvet. Up.,* VI.7.
7. *VS,* I.1.2, *janmādyasya yataḥ,* cf., *BG,* VII.6 and X.8.
8. *BG,* VII.7.
9. Ibid., X.39.
10. Ibid., IX.4.
11. Ibid., XVIII.61.
12. *Bṛ.Up.,* V.7-22.
13. *Tait. Āraṇyaka,* III.11.
14. *BG,* XV.16-17.
15. See *supra,* ch. 15, pp. 163-65.
16. *BG,* X.21-38.
17. Ibid., VII.8 and 9.
18. *Ch. Up.,* III.14.
19. *Śvet., Up.,* III.15.
20. *BG,* X.41.
21. Ibid., IX.17-18.
22. Ibid., IX.22.
23. Ibid., IX.16, 24.
24. Ibid., IX.29.
25. *Śvet., Up.,* III.11-16.
26. *BG,* XV.16.
27. Ibid., XII.1.
28. *Praśna Up.,* V.1.
29. *BG,* VII.13. See also VII.15, *Māyayā apahṛta jñāna.*
30. Ibid., II.39.
31. Ibid., II.12.

32. *BG*, II.17.
33. Ibid., II.20.
34. Ibid., II.24.
35. *Kaṭha Up.*, V.13. See also *Śvet. Up.*, VI.13, *nityo nityānāṁ cetanaḥ cetanānāṁ eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān.*
36. *BG*, VII.5.
37. Ibid., XIII.19, *prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva viddhi anādi ubhau api.*
38. See *Praśna Up.*, IV.9, *eṣa hi draṣṭā spraṣṭā śrotrā ghrātā rasayitā mantā boddhā kartā vijñānātmā puruṣaḥ.*
39. *BG*, XIII.20, *kārya kāraṇa kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate. . . .*
40. Ibid., III.27, *prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇair karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ; ahaṁkāra vimūḍātmā kartāhaṁ iti manyate.*
41. Ibid., XVIII.14, *adhiṣṭhānaṁ tathā kartā karaṇam ca pṛthagvidham; vividhāś ca pṛthakceṣṭā daivam cai' vā'tra pañcamam.*
42. Ibid., V.14.
43. See, *TC* on *BG*, III.29. See also *VS*, IV.4-8, *saṁkalpādeva tu tat śruteḥ.* Also *Ch. Up.*, VIII.2-1.
44. See *BG*, XIV.5, *sattvam rajas tamas iti guṇaḥ prakṛti saṁbhavaḥ; nibadhanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam.*
45. Ibid., XV.17-18.
46. Ibid., VIII.3.
47. Ibid., XII.1.
48. Ibid., VIII.21.
49. See *Bṛ. Up.*, V.7-22, *ya ātmani tiṣṭhan ātmano antaro yaṁ ātmā na veda yasyātmā śarīram yaḥ ātmānam antaro yamayati sa ta ātmā antaryāmī amṛtaḥ.*
50. *BG*, XV.7.
51. Ibid., XVIII.61, *Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛddeśe' rjuna tiṣṭhati; brāhmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.*
52. Ibid., XIII.2.
53. *VS*, II.3-42, *aṁśo nānā vyapadeśāt anyathā ca. . . .*
54. *Śvet. Up.*, I.12, *bhoktā bhogyaṁ preritāraṁ ca matvā sarvam proktaṁ trividham brahma etat.*
55. *BG*, VII.4-5.
56. Ibid., XIV.3, *mama yonir mahad brahma.*
57. *Tait., Up.*, III.1.
58. *BG*, VII.6.
59. Ibid., VII.5-6.
60. Ibid., IX.7-8.
61. Ibid., IX.10.
62. Ibid., XIV.3.
63. *BG*, XIII.5, *mahābhūtany ahaṁkāro buddhir avyaktameva ca; indriyāṇi daśai' kaṁ ca pañca ce' ndriyagocarāḥ.*
64. Ibid., VII.14.
65. *Śvet. Up.*, IV.9.
66. Ibid., I.3, *te dhyāna-yogānugatā anupaśyan devātma-śaktiṁ svaguṇair nigūḍham.*
67. *BG*, IX.4.
68. Ibid., VII.7.
69. *Ch. Up.*, III.14-1.
70. *Śvet. Up.*, III.15.
71. *BG*, IX.16-19.

CHAPTER 20

The *Sādhana*

IN the preceding chapters, we have presented the details of the three *tattvas* namely *Paramātman*, *jīvātman* and *prakṛti* as enunciated in the *Bhagavadgītā*. We shall now give an account of the doctrine of *sādhana* or the spiritual discipline laid down in the *Gītā* for attaining the Supreme Goal (*parama-puruṣārtha*).

The theory of *sādhana* constitutes the central theme of the *Bhagavadgītā*. As pointed out in the introduction, the *Gītā* was initiated by Lord Kṛṣṇa, keeping Arjuna as the media, to impart the ways and means to be adopted for securing liberation from bondage (*mokṣa*). It is essentially a *mokṣa-śāstra*, as is the Vedānta, intended to teach the religious and ethical way of life that leads to attain *mokṣa*. Hence, the theory of *sādhana* figures as the dominant subject matter of the *Gītā*. As compared to the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra*, the *Gītā* furnishes in much greater detail all aspects of the spiritual discipline to be pursued by the seekers of *mokṣa*, such as the manner in which *karma-yoga* is to be observed, the yogic methodology to be adopted for the practice of meditation (*upāsanā*) either on *jīvātman* or *Paramātman*, the cultivation of ethical virtues and strict adherence to the religious mode of life. It is essentially a religious classic which deals with the practical philosophy or religious way of life, unlike the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra*, which are mainly metaphysical in character. It is therefore important to understand the theory of *sādhana* taught in the *Gītā*.

The *Gītā* generally uses the term *yoga* to denote the *upāya* or means to attain the spiritual goal. This term also bears other meanings such as *dhyāna* or meditation, the goal of attainment and union with the Supreme Being. But in the context of the *sādhana* for *mokṣa*, *yoga* stands for the spiritual discipline to be adopted as the means to attain the Supreme Goal. When *karma* or the performance of the prescribed ritualistic deed is adopted as the means (*upāya*) to the spiritual goal, it is named as *karma-yoga* or the pathway of action. If *jñāna* or knowledge in the sense of comprehension of the true nature of the individual self or even the *Paramātman* is considered as the *upāya* for the spiritual goal, it is characterized as *jñāna-yoga* or the pathway of knowledge. The same is also termed *sāṁkhya-yoga*, the word *sāṁkhya* being understood as *ātma-tattva*. The *jñāna-yoga* is also called *saṁnyāsa-yoga*, when the renunciation of the prescribed *karma* is considered an essential requirement for the practice of this pathway. The term *dhyāna-yoga* is also adopted in the *Gītā* for the *jñāna-yoga* so far as *dhyāna* or meditation upon *jīvātman* or *Paramātman* is an essential ingredient of it. If *bhakti* or unswerving devotion to *Paramātman* is adopted as the means (*upāya*) to attain *Paramātman* who is the Supreme Goal, then it is termed *bhakti-yoga* or the pathway of devotion. We come across all these terms in the *Bhagavadgītā* in connection with the teachings about *sādhana*. But according to the *Gītā*, these are not exclusive pathways to attain the same Spiritual Goal. If that were so, the goal to be attained would not be the same. But the Supreme Goal is one and it is the liberation from bondage and the attainment of *Paramātman*. As will be seen later these different pathways are inter-connected in the form of one being the principal means to *mokṣa*, while the other two are subordinate means. How they serve each other will be discussed separately. For the present, it may be noted that the *sādhana* laid down by the *Gītā* comprises *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*.

I. The Doctrine of *Karma-yoga*

This is the first stage of the *sādhana* prescribed by the *Gītā*. Though it is not the direct means to the liberation from bondage, it is considered as an important and essential part of the *sādhana*. The *adhyāyas* three to five mainly deal with this subject along with *jñāna-yoga*. A few verses of the second, sixth and eighteenth *adhyāyas* also cover it. We shall take note of the essential features of the *karma-yoga* and its role in the *sādhana* as stated in the verses without imposing the divergent views of the commentator on the subject.

The word *karma* bears different meanings in the Vedānta. It generally means action or any activity of an individual. It also refers to the results of the actions of the past lives in the form of *puṇya* and *pāpa*. It also denotes the ritualistic deeds enjoined in the Vedas such as *yajñas* or sacrifices, *tapas* or penance and religious activities such as worship of God, recitation of Vedic texts etc. It is in this sense the *Gītā* generally employs the term *karma*. It is not therefore mere action as it is generally understood but more appropriately, it means the performance of prescribed deeds.

When *karma* or deeds are performed for the purpose of *mokṣa* it is named *karma-yoga. Karma* performed for the purpose of achieving worldly benefits such as wealth, prosperity, progeny and even heavenly enjoyment such as *svarga* are treated as *kāmya-karma* since they do not lead to liberation from bondage. On the contrary, only those *karmas* enjoined by the sacred texts, which are helpful to overcome the bondage and thereby attain *mokṣa* come under the purview of *karma-yoga.* The *Gītā* clearly points out that those who pursue the *karmas* for acquisition of material rewards are bound to have re-birth as the fruit of action.[1] But those who follow the *karma-yoga* with the knowledge of the true nature of the self will be able to overcome bondage.[2]

Nature and Types of Karma-yoga

There are several religious duties laid down by the sacred texts. The *Gītā* has enumerated the following as illustrative of types of *karma-yoga*[3]:

1. Performance of sacrifices in the form of worshipping God (*daivaṁ yajña*).
2. Offering of sacrifices into the fire of Brahman (*brahmāgnau yajñam*).
3. Restraint of sense organs (*indriya-saṁyama*).
4. Control of all the functions of the senses and the activities of the vital breath by the mind.
5. Offering as a sacrifice one's material possessions for charity or for worship of God (*dravya-yajña*).
6. Observance of austerities as a sacrifice (*tapo yajña*) such as fasting, severe vows, etc.
7. Spiritual pursuits such as going on a pilgrimage to sacred places.
8. Recitation of Vedic texts and learning their meanings (*svādhyāya jñāna-yajña*).
9. Practice of breath control with the restriction on food (*prāṇāyāma parāyaṇa*).

All these are regarded as different forms of *karma-yoga* to be adopted according to one's liking and capacity. It is also mentioned that along with the observance of these different forms of *karma-yoga,* the performance of the *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* enjoined in accordance with one's *varṇa* or caste and *āśrama* or stage of life are to be necessarily followed.[4]

Karma-yoga adopted as part of the *sādhana* for the purpose of *mokṣa* is required to fulfil certain conditions. First and foremost is that the spiritual aspirant should not develop any desire for the fruits of the deeds. The *Gītā* emphatically states that under no circumstances an individual performing the prescribed *karmas* for the purpose of attaining liberation from bondage should ever entertain the desire for the fruits of the deeds. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa, while teaching about the manner of observing *karma-yoga*:

> *karmaṇy eva adhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana*
> *mā karma phala hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo'stv akarmaṇi*[5]
> To *karma* alone has thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be the motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction.

The fuller implication of the verse, as interpreted by the commentators, has been explained in chapter 2. This significant teaching of the *Gītā* emphasizes the spirit of disinterestedness to be developed in the matter of doing one's duties without the expectation of the rewards for the deeds. It is called *niṣkāma-karma* or performance of *karma* without attachment to it and without desire for the fruits thereof. According to the *Gītā*, acts done with a desire for the fruits cause bondage, whereas acts performed without any motivation for results lead to liberation. Thus says the *Gītā*: "Those who relinquish the fruits arising from their actions become freed from the bondage of re-birth and go to the higher realm free from all sufferings."[6] It therefore repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the renunciation of desires for the results of all prescribed deeds performed by an aspirant for *mokṣa*.

The second important requirement is the renunciation of attachment (*saṅga*) to the *karmas*. What is needed for this purpose is the development of the mental attitude that the individual who performs the deeds is not the doer or the agent of action (*kartā*). The *Gītā* suggests two ways of overcoming the sense of ego. According to it, all actions are caused by the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, namely *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, of which the physical body and the sense organs including the mind are constituted and not by the mere individual self. That is, the individual self functions as the agent of action due to its association with a body and the sense organs and not by itself. But a person, who does not realize this fact, thinks that the self is the doer. By understanding the true nature of the individual self and also the role of the *guṇas* in the form of mind and senses, which cause the actions, one can develop this sense of non-attachment to the *karmas.*

The second and easier way of getting over the sense of egoism is to dedicate all actions to the Supreme Lord. Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa: "By dedicating all actions to Me with the mind being focused on the self, you perform the deeds, free from desires and selfishness and devoid of any mental anguish."[7] The performance of the prescribed deeds by dedicating them to the Supreme Lord and by regarding them as worship of God for His pleasure, constitutes an important feature of *karma-yoga.* As will be explained later, the term *tyāga* and *sarva-saṁkalpa saṁnyāsa* mentioned in the *Gīta* refer to the abandonment of the selfish attachment to the *karmas* and the desires for their fruits. This teaching is held in high esteem by Lord Kṛṣṇa and one who follows it faithfully would be released from the shackles of *karma* that cause bondage. Thus it is stated: "Those men who follow this teaching of Mine with faith and without cavil, are released from *karmas* that cause bondage."[8]

Another important requirement of *karma-yoga* is that an individual who embarks on this pathway should have acquired the knowledge of the true nature of the self (*ātma yāthātmya-jñāna*). This is evident from the fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna about *karma-yoga* after imparting to Him the true nature of the self as distinct from the perishable physical body.[9] Unless one has a proper knowledge of the *jīvātman,* who is the aspirant for *mokṣa* and also *Paramātman* who is the goal of attainment, it is not possible to develop a spirit of non-attachment to *karma* (*kartṛtva tyāga*) and also the mental attitude that *karmas* performed are intended purely for the pleasure of God. The knowledge of the true nature of *jīvātman* and also the Supreme Being, which is known as *tattva-jñāna* is an essential requirement even for the *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga.* At the commencement of seventh *adhyāya* Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, prior to the teaching of *bhakti-yoga* that He will instruct him *jñāna* and *vijñāna* about *Paramātman.*[10]

The Role of Karma-yoga in the Sādhana for Mokṣa

According to the *Gītā, karma-yoga* is to be necessarily pursued by every individual who aspires for liberation from bondage. It does not advocate, as contended by Śaṁkara, that *karma-yoga* is not required for the *jñāna-niṣṭhas* or those who have become the ascetics (*parivrājakas*) by renouncing all *karmas* and who have already established firmly in the knowledge of the *ātman.* On the other hand, it is intended only for the *karma-niṣṭhas* or those householders (*gṛhasthas*), who have not yet had the realization of the true nature of the self. They have to observe it to secure the purity of mind (*sattva-śuddhi*), which helps to attain the realization of the self. In reply to the query made by Arjuna regarding the relative importance of *jñāna* and *karma,* Lord Kṛṣṇa states that twofold way of life has been taught by Him namely, *jñāna-yoga* for the Sāṁkhyas or men of wisdom and *karma-yoga* for the *yogins* or men of action. In another context, the *Gītā* states that *karma* or observance of *karma-yoga* is required by the *ārurukṣu*[11] or an aspirant who wishes to attain the higher goal, whereas for one who has attained the goal, *śama* or development of tranquillity of mind is needed. The word *śama* is interpreted by Śaṁkara as the renunciation of the performance of deeds. Both these statements are construed by Śaṁkara in favour of the abandonment of *karma-yoga* by the *jñāna-niṣṭhas.*

We have discussed the implication of these verses in chapters 3 and 6. As explained therein, the *Gītā* does not support the theory of total renunciation of the prescribed *karmas* by certain categories of persons. All the aspirants to *mokṣa* have to perform the prescribed deeds in accordance with one's *varṇa* or caste and *āśrama,* or stages of life until the attainment of total liberation from bondage. As it will be seen presently, the *Gītā* also does not acknowledge that *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* are exclusive paths intended for different categories of persons viz., *jñāna-niṣṭhas* and *karma-niṣṭhas.* It explicitly states that *karmas* such as *yajña, dāna* and *tapas* are not to be given up but should be performed (*yajña, dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyaṁ kāryam eva tat*).[12] These have to be performed only by giving up attachment to the *karmas* and desires for fruits. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* also states that Brahmins seek to know Brahman through study of scriptures, *yajña, dāna, tapas,* etc.[13] Based on this Upaniṣadic text, the *Vedāntasūtra* also emphasizes the need of observances of all the prescribed deeds until one attains Brahman. The relevant *sūtra* reads: *sarvāpekṣā ca yajñādi śruteḥ aśvavat.*[14] It means that all the ritualistic deeds are needed for attaining the knowledge of Brahman, since it is stated so in the scriptural texts enjoining the *yajña* etc., as in the case of the horse which is intended to travel from one place to another is used with the requisite accessories until one reaches the destination.

According to the *Gītā*, *karma* is inevitable for every individual. It is not possible for one to remain even for a moment without some activity. Everyone is made to act helplessly by the impulses of nature. As long as one is embodied, he cannot escape from action. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore exhorts Arjuna to perform the *karma* that has to be done without attachment (*asaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara.*[15] Right through, the *Gītā* emphasizes the need of performing *karma.*

The *Gītā* also mentions *karma-saṁnyāsa* or the renunciation of *karma*. The fifth *adhyāya* is titled *Karma-saṁnyāsa-yoga.* Prima facie, this term would imply that the performance of the prescribed *karmas* is not mandatory. But on closer examination of the relevant verses, it becomes evident that the *Gītā* does not support the theory of total renunciation of all deeds. In the fifth *adhyāya,* where the subject of relative merit of *saṁnyāsa* and *karma-yoga* comes up, it is pointed out that *karma-yoga* is better than *saṁnyāsa* and that a *karma-yogin* is to be regarded as *nitya-saṁnyāsī,* thereby indicating that there is no opposition between the two. It specifically mentions that *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are not two exclusive disciplines meant for two different types of individuals namely *karma-niṣṭhas* and *jñāna-niṣṭhas.* Considering these statements it would follow that *karma-saṁnyāsa* does not mean total renunciation of all deeds but on the contrary, it refers to the abandonment of the attachment to the deeds as an agent of action (*kartā*) and also the abandonment of desires for their fruits. In other words, *saṁnyāsa* is the development of the spirit of renunciation and not the actual renunciation of the deeds.

This point is made more explicit in the eighteenth *adhyāya* where the concept of *saṁnyāsa* and *tyāga* are discussed. After mentioning the different views regarding this matter, Lord Kṛṣṇa states as his decisive view that the performance of the prescribed deeds are not to be renounced since these are helpful to ensure the purity of mind for those observing meditation on *Paramātman.* He also says emphatically that the deeds ought to be performed without any selfish attachment to them and also without the expectation of rewards. The relevant verse reads: *etānyapi tu karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā phalāni ca; kartavyāni iti me pārtha niścitam matam uttamam.*[16] Thus, it follows that the renunciation of all deeds is not advocated by the *Gītā.*

According to the *Gītā*, there is no opposition between the *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, also called *sāṁkhya-yoga* and *saṁnyāsa-yoga*. The *Gītā* itself states that only the ignorant speak of *sāṁkhya* or the *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* as different and not the men of knowledge.[17] He who is firmly set in one attains the fruit of both. It is clearly pointed out that the goal attained by the *sāṁkhyas* is the same as the goal attained by the persons observing *karma-yoga*.[18] The two are not therefore exclusive paths intended for two categories of persons namely, *karma-niṣṭhas* and *jñāna-niṣṭhas*. They are complementary and secure the same higher status (*sthānam*). We shall discuss later the nature of the goal.

According to the *Gītā*, *karma-yoga* subserves both *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*. The purity of the mind (*sattva-śuddhi*) is an essential pre-requisite for the practice of both *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* as *sādhana* for *mokṣa*. The performance of the prescribed deeds with the spirit of disinterestedness and as worship of God secures this purity for the spiritual aspirant by removing the sins of the past. The *Gītā* says: "The *yogins* (men of action) perform deeds abandoning attachment for purification of the mind."[19] With the acquisition of the purity of mind they attain steadfastness in the knowledge of true nature of the self which is described in the *Gītā* as *sthita-prajñā*. As pointed out in chapter 2, this state of knowledge does not imply either the actual realization of the identity of the *jīvātman* with Brahman, as Śaṁkara says or even the direct perception of *Paramātman* enjoying His bliss, as Madhva observes, for the obvious reason that the meditation either on *jīvātman* or *Paramātman* is not envisaged at the stage of observing the *niṣkāma-karma* for the purpose of *sattva-śuddhi*. On the other hand, it refers to a state of mind, which is attained after the observance of *niṣkāma-karma* by controlling the mind and sense organs leading to steadfastness in the knowledge of the self.

As we have observed in chapter 2, the verses describing the characteristics of a *sthitaprajña* do not also convey the idea of direct realization of either *jīvātman* or *Paramātman*. On the contrary, they refer to the state of *vairāgya* or non-attachment developed by the strict observance of *niṣkāma-karma*, as a result of which the *karma-yogin* becomes the *sthitaprajñā*. The *Gītā* says that after securing this state of mind one is fit for realization of the goal (*samādhau acalā buddhiḥ tadā yogam avāpsyasi*).[20] The word *yoga* here means *ātmāvalokana* in the context of teaching about *ātma-tattva*. The term *samādhi* does not refer to the state of the *asamprajñāta samādhi,* as understood in Pātañjala-yoga. On the other hand, it refers to the steadfastness of the mind in the self (*samādhīyate asmin ātmajñānam iti samādhiḥ manaḥ*). The *sthitaprajña* is thus described as one who has conquered the senses and mind, which cause attachment to worldly pleasures and thereby further bondage. He enjoys mental tranquillity that neither joy nor sorrow affect him. He neither develops hatred towards others nor any attachment to any because he has conquered the two unethical mental qualities of *kāma* or desire and *krodha* or anger. Being immersed in the delight of the knowledge of the self, he enjoys the peace of mind (*śānti*). These descriptions reveal that he has become the fittest person for the practice of *jñāna-yoga* to attain the vision of the self. *Karma-yoga* does not therefore directly lead either to the realization of the identity of *jīvātman* and Brahman or the direct perception of the *Paramātman.*

The Goal of Karma-yoga

If *niṣkāma-karma* does not directly lead to the vision of *Paramātman* in the absence of *bhakti-yoga,* does it secure the vision of *jīvātman*? There are a few verses, which convey the idea of this possibility. In fact on the basis of these verses Rāmānuja takes the view that *karma-yoga* by itself serves as a means to the vision of *jīvātman* (*ātmāvalokana*). This is considered possible because *karma-yoga* includes in it *jñāna-yoga* in so far as the *karma-yogin* is also absorbed in the contemplation of the *jīvātman* while performing the prescribed deeds with the conviction that he is not the doer (*kartā*) and that the *karmas* undertaken by him are dedicated to God as His worship.

In connection with the teaching about the concept of *karma, vikarma* and *akarma,* the *Gītā* states that a *yogī* should see *akarma* in *karma* and *karma* in *akarma* (*karmaṇy akarma paśyet akarmāṇi ca karma*).[21] We have discussed in chapter 4 the fuller implication of this statement. As we have observed therein, the term *akarma* with reference to *karma* means knowledge (*karmetarat ātmajñāna*). In the context of performance of *karma-yoga,* it signifies that one should have a clear understanding of the nature of the self even while he is performing the deeds. Similarly, one should be aware that the *karma* is involved while he is engaged in the pursuit of knowledge of the self. *Karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are interconnected. The *karma-yogin* is also engaged in the contemplation of *jīvātman* and in the same way the *jñāna-yogin* is required to perform the prescribed deeds for gaining *sattva-śuddhi* needed for concentration of the mind on *jīvātman.* In view of this, *karma-yoga* is regarded as a means of attaining *ātmāvalokana,* which is the goal of *jñāna-yoga* outlined in the sixth *adhyāya.* In a more specific way, the *Gītā* points out that a *karma-yogin* who has renounced all desires for the fruits of the deeds attains the everlasting peace which is described as *naiṣṭhikīṁ śānti.*[22] The *naiṣṭhiki śānti* implies, in the context of the observance of *karma-yoga,* the blissful experience of the *jīvātman.*

While considering the relative merits of *saṁnyāsa-yoga* versus *karma-yoga,* the *Gītā* says that the *karma-yogin* realizes the self in a shorter period than the one embarking on *jñāna-yoga.* The relevant verse reads: *saṁnyāsastu mahābāho duḥkam āptum ayogataḥ; yogayukto munir brahma na-cireṇa adhigacchati.*[23]

"*Saṁnyāsa* is difficult to attain without *karma-yoga* but the sage (*muni*) who follows *yoga* (*karma-yoga*) attains *brahma* soon." The term *brahma* in the verse is *jīvātman* in the context of *karma-yoga.* The word *muni* refers to the *karma-yogin* since he constantly contemplates on *jīvātman* and hence he is able to realize *jīvātman.* The one engaged in the observance of *niṣkāma-karma* has acquired the purity of mind (*viśuddhātmā*) by the eradication of the sins of the past. He would have conquered his mind (*vijitātmā*) and the senses (*jitendriyaḥ*). It is therefore possible for him to have the realization of the self.[24]

In another context, while discussing the nature of *kṣetra* (body) and *kṣetrajña* (*jīvātman*), the *Gītā* explicitly mentions that some visualizes the *ātman* (*jīvātman*) by means of *karma-yoga* and others by means of *jñāna-yoga* and also *dhyāna-yoga.*[25] It therefore acknowledges the possibility of direct vision of self through *karma-yoga.*

Taking into consideration all these facts it is evident that *karma-yoga* can also lead to the attainment of the vision of the self.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF *JÑĀNA-YOGA*

Jñāna-yoga constitutes the next stage of the *sādhana* for *mokṣa.* The *Gītā* acknowledges it as the means (*upāya*) to attain the spiritual goal as distinct from *karma-yoga,* though both are prescribed for different kinds of persons in accordance with their competence.[26] The sixth *adhyāya* which is named *dhyāna-yoga* mainly deals with this subject. The *adhyāyas* III-V and a few verses in the second and eighteenth also discuss it along with *karma-yoga*. On the basis of this material we shall present the details of this theory.

The Nature of Jñāna-yoga

Before we consider the nature of *jñāna-yoga* and its goal, we have to understand the meaning of this concept. *Jñāna* generally means the knowledge of the objects derived through the mind and the sense organs. It is not in this sense that the *Gītā* uses it. The term *jñāna* has a specific connotation and it denotes the knowledge of *ātman* (*ātma-jñāna*). The word *ātman* is applicable to both *jīvātman* or the individual self and *Paramātman* or the universal Self.[27] But in the context of *jñāna-yoga*, the *Gītā* employs the term *jñāna* to denote the knowledge about the *jīvātman*. Another term used to denote *jñāna* is *sāṁkhya*, which means *ātma-tattva*.[28] When *jñāna* about the true nature of the *ātman* serves as the *upāya* for attaining the spiritual goal, it is regarded as *jñāna-yoga*. As will be pointed out later, the spiritual goal of *jñāna-yoga* is the direct realization of *jīvātman* (*ātma-sākṣātkāra*). For the purpose of achieving this goal, the *Gītā* prescribes the practice of yogic *sādhana* which comprises among other requirements, the control of the senses and mind, focusing the mind on the self and meditating continuously (*dhyāna*) on the self. Taking these facts into consideration, the term *jñāna-yoga* in the technical sense refers to the yogic discipline aimed to attain the realization of the *jīvātman*. To be more specific, *jñāna-yoga* is the constant meditation on the true nature of the *jīvātman* or *nirantara ātmacintana*, as correctly explained by Vedānta Deśika.[29] Yāmuna in one verse defines it as follows: *Jñāna-yogo jitasvāntaiḥ pariśuddha ātmani sthitiḥ*. It means: *Jñāna-yoga* is the contemplation of the self in its true form after one has achieved control over the senses and mind. *Jñāna-yoga* is also named as *dhyāna-yoga* since *dhyāna* or meditation on *ātman* is an important component of it. It is also regarded as *samādhi-yoga* since the practice of this yogic discipline culminates in *samādhi* or the vision of the self (*ātma-sākṣātkāra*). The commentators some times employ the term *jñāna-yoga* to denote the goal which is the direct realization of the identity of *jīvātman* with *Paramātman* (acc. to S), or the direct vision of *Paramātman* (acc. to M) or the vision of the *jīvātman* (acc. to R).[30] But according to the *Gītā* , *jñāna-yoga* in its technical sense stands for the yogic discipline similar to the eightfold discipline (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) of Pātañjala-yoga system, leading to the realization of the self.

Jñāna-yoga and its Relation to Karma-yoga

As pointed out in the preceding section, *jñāna-yoga* is closely related to the *karma-yoga* and the two are not exclusive pathways. At the commencement of the third *adhyāya*, a question is raised by Arjuna relating to the relative importance of *karma-yoga* versus *jñāna-yoga*. By way of answering this query, the *Gītā* points out that the performance of *karma* is important for the spiritual aspirant pursuing the pathway of knowledge. *Karma* is inescapable for a person as long as he is bound with a body and organs. Even for a *jñāna-yogin* the performance of *karma* is unavoidable, since he has to sustain his life until the goal is achieved. According to the *Gītā*, the performance of the ritualistic deeds laid down by the sacred texts does not cause any bondage to an individual as long as he remains unattached to them.[31] The example of Janaka and others who are learned kṣatriyas and also *jñānīs*, is cited to substantiate the fact that even *jñāna-yogins* strive to attain liberation through the observance of *karma-yoga*.[32]

The *Gītā* emphasizes the need and importance of the observance of *niṣkāma karma* by the aspirant embarking on the pathway of *jñāna*. An aspirant who wishes to pursue *jñāna-yoga* is confronted with certain difficulties. The greatest obstacles that come in the way of the practice of *jñāna-yoga* are *rāga* or attachment of senses to the objects of pleasure and *dveṣa* or aversion when the desires to enjoy them are not fulfilled. These two impediments are figuratively described as enemies (*vairī*) and as the great devourer (*mahāśana*).[33] All beings including men of knowledge are bound by the physical constitution (*prakṛti*) and they are naturally attracted by the objects of pleasure owing to the influence of the latent impressions of the past lives. It therefore becomes difficult to escape from the clutches of the uncontrollable senses. The observance of *niṣkāma karma* helps to overcome the past sins and thereby gain purity of mind and the control of the senses. The *Gītā* therefore advocates the observance of *karma-yoga* before embarking on *jñāna-yoga* as it then becomes easier to practise it successfully until the spiritual goal is achieved.

In the fifth *adhyāya* also, while discussing the relative importance of *karma-yoga* and *saṁnyāsa*, which is taken as *jñāna-yoga* since it involves renunciation of the attachment to the *karmas* and their fruits, the *Gītā* states that it is difficult to achieve *saṁnyāsa* without the observance of *karma*.[34] In this connection mention is made of the *sarva karma saṁnyāsa* and *sarva saṁkalpa saṁnyāsa*. These terms may be construed in favour of the renunciation of all deeds by the aspirant practising *jñāna-yoga.* In fact Śaṁkara takes the view that the *saṁnyāsa* in its true sense (*pāramārthika*) implies the renunciation of all deeds and that it is mandatory for the ascetics (*parivrājakas*) who alone are fully qualified to observe *jñāna-yoga.* But the verses of the *Gītā* do not lend any support to this view. As explained in the eighteenth *adhyāya*, the concept of *saṁnyāsa* which is the same as *tyāga* implies the renunciation of the attachment to the deeds and also the desire for their fruits and not the abandonment of the deeds as such.[35] Even a *saṁnyāsi* is required to observe *dharma* prescribed for this stage of life (*āśrama*) such as the begging of alms and daily worship.[36] Even if he becomes free from bondage by the realization of the self, he is required to perform the mandatory deeds (*nitya karma*) laid down for this stage of life as long as he remains embodied. The *Gītā* does not make a distinction between two exclusive categories of the individuals namely, *jñāna-niṣṭhas* or those who have become *parivrājakas* by renouncing all *karmas* and who alone are qualified for observing *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-niṣṭhas* or those who are leading the life of householders (*gṛhasthas*) and who need the observance of *karma-yoga.* As we have observed in the preceding section, the verse referring to two kinds of individuals as *sāṁkhyas* and *yogins*[37] only refer to the persons of two types who can pursue either of the two pathways in accordance with their competence. It does not mean two different categories of persons namely, *sāṁkhyas* and *yogins* for the reason that either of the two disciplines leads to the same goal. (*yat sāṁkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānam tad yogairapi gamyate*).[38]

The Nature of Yogic Sādhana

The sixth *adhyāya* spells out in detail the requirements to be fulfilled for practising *jñāna-yoga*, which is also named as *dhyāna-yoga* and *samādhi-yoga* (acc. to M). It lays down the various steps to be followed for achieving the final goal. The most important requirement is the control of the mind and the senses without which it is not possible to practise *jñāna-yoga.* The *Gītā* specifically states that one should endeavour to seek to know the *ātman* (individual self) by means of the mind (*uddharet ātmanā ātmānaṁ*). Only an individual, who has conquered the mind (*jitātman*), who is tranquil and unaffected by happiness and sorrow, is fit to attain the spiritual goal. For the purpose of the control of the mind, the *Gītā* suggests the practice of *yoga* discipline on the lines similar to the eightfold discipline laid down by Patañjali in the *Yogasūtras.*[39] The aspirant should select a quiet place and remain alone. He should sit in a clean place on a firm seat, neither too high nor too low, which is to be covered by sacred grass, deer skin and a cloth one over the other. It is necessary to maintain a steady pasture by holding the body erect and remain motionless, the gaze being fixed at the tip of the nose. He should remain free from desires as well as longings for possession (*aparigraha*). He should develop a serene mind being free from fear and observe celibacy (*brahmacarya*). By thus holding the mind under control, the aspirant should fix the thought on God and remain concentrated (*manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ*). The purpose of focusing the mind on God is intended to secure purity and concentration of the mind. This is not the same thing as meditation on *Paramātman* as required for the practice of *bhakti-yoga.* By pursuing such a rigorous discipline, the *jñāna-yogī* attains the spiritual goal.

The Goal of Jñāna-yoga

Regarding the nature of the goal, the *Gītā* states that the *yogīs* of controlled mind attain the peace (*śānti*), which is described in terms of *nirvāṇa paramāṁ.*[40] We have discussed the implication of this verse in chapter 6, as explained by the three commentators. The word *nirvāṇa* means a state of bliss and the word *paramāṁ* means highest and hence the compound word *nirvāṇa-paramāṁ*, signifies the highest state of bliss which abides in the *Paramātman* (*mayi saṁsthitaḥ*). It cannot be the experience of bliss of *Paramātman* since the meditation on *Paramātman* is not envisaged in the practice of *jñāna-yoga.* Nor is it the state of *mokṣa*, the word *nirvāṇa* being understood as liberation, since the *yogī* is still embodied and not totally liberated from the association of mind and body. It is therefore a state of experience of the bliss of *jīvātman,* which is the object of meditation in *jñāna-yoga.* That the object of meditation is *jīvātman* is also evident from the fact that the *yogī* finds supreme delight by perceiving the self (*jīvātman*), through the mind which is controlled by the practice of *yoga.* Thus says the *Gītā*: *yatra cai'va ātmanā ātmānaṁ paśyan ātmani tuṣyati.*[41] The word *atmanā* refers to the mind, *ātmānaṁ* to the self and *ātmani* to the body in which the self abides. *Ātman* can also mean *Paramātman* but in the present context of *jñāna-yoga* directed to the realization of the *jīvātman* and also in the absence of meditation on *Paramātman* in the sixth *adhyāya*, it is more appropriate to take it as *jīvātman.*

In connection with the description of what the *yogī* achieves by the practice of *jñāna-yoga*, the *Gītā* mentions that he becomes *brahma-bhūta* as a result of the mental impurities being got rid off and that he also attains easily infinite bliss of *brahma-saṁsparśa.*[42] The words *brahma-bhūta* and *brahma-saṁsparśa* appear to convey the idea of enjoyment of the bliss of Brahman (*Paramātman*). But in the context of meditation on *jīvātman* it cannot mean the enjoyment of Brahman (*Paramātman*). As we have explained in chapter 6, the term *brahma* also denotes *jīvātman. Brahma-bhūta,* therefore, means realization of *jīvātman* in its essential nature and *brahma-saṁsparśa* means the experience of *jīvātman*, as rightly interpreted by Rāmānuja.

In the eighteenth *adhyāya* also, which is a resume of the important topics covered in the earlier *adhyāyas* along with a restatement of the nature of the *sādhana*, the *Gītā* mentions that one who pursues the *yoga* practice becomes *brahma-bhūta* or realizes the state of *brahma.*[43] It is possible to take the expression of the *brahma-bhūta* to mean that the *yogī* becomes one with Brahman, as Śaṁkara interprets. We have discussed this matter in chapter 18 and as observed therein, the term *brahma* in the context of the *jñāna-yoga* refers to the *jīvātman.* This is evident from the fact that the *Gītā* itself says that one who has become *brahma-bhūta* attains *bhakti* towards *Paramātman* (*madbhaktim labhate parām*).[44] If either *Paramātman* or even the identity of *jīva* with *Paramātman* is already realized, there would be no need for *para bhakti* to attain *Paramātman.* Thus, it follows that the final goal of *jñāna-yoga* is the direct realization of *jīvātman* in its true form.

According to the *Gītā*, the *ātma-sākṣātkāra* or the realization of the *jīvātman* comes gradually in stages. In the initial stage, the constant and unceasing meditation on the self secures for the *yogī* philosophic insight into the nature of his self viz., that the self is essentially of the nature of *jñāna* and *ānanda* and on the basis of this knowledge he realizes that all other selves are also of the same character).[45] Such a person is described by the *Gītā* as *samadarśī. Samadarśitva* does not imply oneness or identity of *ātmans*, as Śaṁkara interprets, since the *Gītā* admits the plurality of the individual self. This awareness of the selves being of the same nature in respect of the intrinsic nature makes the *yogī* to look upon all living beings as equal in so far as their intrinsic nature is concerned. Thus says the *Gītā*: "The wise men regard as equal a person blessed with knowledge and humility, an ordinary Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste.[46] The difference between one living being and another is all due to the physical bodies assumed by them due to the past *karma*.

When the *yogī* reaches the higher stage of *yoga*, he realizes that *Paramātman* is immanent in the individual self which, when it is totally freed from *karma*, bears similarity with *Paramātman*. This similarity of the self with *Paramātman* is not on account of the two being identical, as Śaṁkara understands. As the selves are many and also different from *Paramātman*, the similarity (*śamyatva*) mentioned by the *Gītā* is only in respect of certain characteristics such as *jñāna* and *ānanda*. The *yogī* also realizes that his pleasure and pain do not affect the self in its true form. In the final stage of *yoga* practice, when the *yogī* attains the direct vision of the self (*jīvātman*), he enjoys the blissful character of the self and becomes absorbed in the joy of the spiritual experience, which is the culmination of *jñāna-yoga*. This state of the spiritual bliss is regarded in the *sāṁkhya-yoga* system as *kaivalya* or the state of the self in its true nature (*kevalāvasthā*) devoid of all external experience. The *Gītā* also acknowledges tacitly the state of *kaivalya*. Though the term *kaivalya* is not mentioned, it is implied in the concept of *jijñāsu* or one who aspires to attain the state of experience of the blissful *jīvātman*, which is designated as *akṣara* in the eighth *adhyāya*. According to the *Gītā*, those who attain this state have become free from bondage and hence they do not have rebirth. Thus says the *Gītā*:

> *avyakto akṣara ityuktaḥ tamāhuḥ paramāṁ gatim; yaṁ prāpya na nivartante taddhāma paramaṁ mama.*[47]
> It is called unmanifest (*avyakta*) and imperishable (*akṣara*). This, they say, is the Supreme Goal. This is My Supreme Abode (the highest state under the control of *Paramātman*), by attaining which one does not return to bondage.

We have discussed the implication of this verse in chapter 8. As observed therein, in the context of the meditation of the *jijñāsu* or the one seeking the realization of the *jīvātman* (*akṣara*) in its true form, the *yogī* attains the higher status of *kaivalya*, which is under the control of *Paramātman* (*mama paramaṁ dhāma*).

The state of *kaivalya* for which the seekers of *jīvātman* (*jijñasu*) aspire is not regarded by the *Gītā* as the highest goal. The highest goal, according to the *Gītā* is the attainment of *Paramātman* by means of *bhakti-yoga.* The *jñāna-yoga* prescribed by the *Gītā* is therefore intended as an aid (*aṅga*) to *bhakti-yoga.* In the concluding verse of the sixth *adhyāya,* the *Gītā* states explicitly that of all *yogins* such as those who follow the discipline of austerity (*tapas*), Vedic rituals (*karma*), acquisition of scriptural knowledge (*jñāna*) and also those who pursue the *jñāna-yoga* leading to *ātma-sākṣātkāra,* the one who meditates on *Paramātman* with unswerving devotion is the best. The relevant verse reads: *yogināṁ api sarveṣāṁ madgatena antarātmanā, śraddhāvān bhajate yo māṁ sa me yuktatamo mataḥ.*[18]

As we have pointed out in chapter 6, this verse, if properly interpreted with reference to the other types of *yogīs* mentioned in the preceding verse (VI.46) and earlier verses (VI.29-32), establishes beyond any doubt that *jñāna-yoga* is not the direct means to *mokṣa.* On the other hand, it is *bhakti-yoga* as aided by *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* that serves as the direct means to *mokṣa.*

III. THE DOCTRINE OF *BHAKTI-YOGA*

Bhakti-yoga is the most important constituent of the *sādhana* for *mokṣa.* The *Gītā* states that *Paramātman* cannot be attained by any other means than *ananya-bhakti* or unswerving devotion.[19] Rāmānuja regards *bhakti-yoga* as the central theme of the *Bhagavadgītā.* Both Śaṁkara and Madhva also accord an important place to *bhakti* or loving devotion to God in the scheme of *sādhana* for *mokṣa.*

Bhakti-yoga as Distinct from Jñāna-yoga

As we have observed earlier, the *adhyāyas* II-VI generally deal with the theories of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga.* The subject of *bhakti-yoga* is covered mostly in the *adhyāyas* VII-XII along with the nature and Glory of *Paramātman.* Though the concept of *bhakti* or devotion to God is implicit in a few verses of the first *ṣaṭka* in connection with the performance of the prescribed deeds by dedicating them to God and also in the practice of *jñāna-yoga,* the exposition of the theory of *bhakti* as a *sādhana* for *mokṣa* comes up in detail only in the second *ṣaṭka.* The word *bhaj* which is the root word for *bhakti* occurs for the first time in the concluding verse of sixth *adhyāya* in connection with extolling the *yogī* who worships *Paramātman* with devotion and faith as the greatest. Next in the seventh *adhyāya,* while mentioning the four types of devotees who meditate on *Paramātman* viz., *ārta, jijñāsu, arthārthī,* and *jñānī,* the *jñānī* whose devotion is single-minded and who is ever in constant union with the Divine is considered as most dear to God. Similarly, in the twelfth *adhyāya,* while speaking of the two kinds of meditation, one on *Paramātman* and the other on *akṣara brahma,* the former is regarded as the greatest *yogī* (*yuktatama*). More importantly, in the eleventh *adhyāya* Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, who was blessed with the power to have the full vision of the Lord, that He cannot be seen in this full form either by the study of the Vedas, or by the observance of austerities, or by offering gifts, or by the performance of Vedic sacrifices but only by unswerving devotion to *Paramātman,* He can be thus known in His full form, truly seen and attained.[50] From all these statements, it is obvious that *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* is the only direct means of attaining *Paramātman* who is the Supreme Goal. In view of it, the *Gītā* enjoins the observance of *bhakti-yoga* for the purpose of attaining *Paramātman.* Arjuna is thus told to worship *Paramātman,* having entered this impermanent sorrowful world (*anityam asukhaṁ lokam imaṁ prāpya bhajasva mām*[51]). In a more specific way, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna: *manmanā bhava madbhakto madyāji māṁ namaskuru.* "Fix thy mind on Me; do it with devotion to Me. Worship Me; revere Me. The same statement is made in the concluding *adhyāya* as the final teaching of Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna. This establishes the fact that *bhakti-yoga* is an important and also the direct means to the attainment of *Paramātman,* which is the Supreme Goal.

According to the *Gītā,* the *jñāna-yoga,* also named as *dhyāna-yoga* and *samādhi-yoga,* which is enunciated in the sixth *adhyāya,* is distinct from *bhakti-yoga* referred to in the *adhyāyas* IX-XII. Though the methodology or technique of *yoga* practice to be adopted for the two disciplines of *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* is the same and similar to the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* of Patañjali, they are distinct pathways since the nature of the goal to be attained is different. The object of meditation in *jñāna-yoga* is the realization of the *jīvātman* in its true nature, whereas it is the attainment of *Paramātman* in the case of *bhakti-yoga.* The two cannot therefore be the same discipline, as Madhva maintains. The *Gītā* itself draws a distinction between the three pathways as is evident from the following verse:

> *dhyānena ātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā; anye sāṁkhyena yogena karma-yogena cā'pare.*[52]

> By meditation some perceive the self in the self by the self; others by the path of knowledge and still others by the path of *karma.*

The word *ātmānam,* which is the object of vision can be taken either as *Paramātman* or even *jīvātman.* The word *ātmani* refers to the body in which the self abides and the word *ātmanā* means through the mind. The word *dhyāna,* which means meditation is applicable to *bhakti-yoga* since *dhyāna* is an important component of *bhakti-yoga. Dhyāna-yoga* can also mean *jñāna-yoga,* but in this verse, since *sāṁkhya-yoga* is separately mentioned, it denotes only *bhakti-yoga. Sāṁkhya-yoga* is *jñāna-yoga* and it is different from *bhakti-yoga.*

In the eighteenth *adhyāya,*[53] the *Gītā* while summing up the teachings on *sādhana,* also refers to the three pathways and mentions that after the observance of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga,* the *yogī* obtains *parāṁ bhakti* by means of which he attains *Paramātman.* It first states that the aspirant for *mokṣa* who has controlled his mind and who becomes free from all desires attains *naiṣkarmya* through the renunciation of the attachment to deeds. After having attained this state, he engages himself in the practice of *dhyāna-yoga,* which is the same as *jñāna-yoga,* by adopting the *yoga* technique mentioned in the sixth *adhyāya* and becomes *brahma-bhūta* or he realizes the true nature of the *jīvātman,* the word *brahma* in this context being understood as *jīvātman.* Such a *yogī* who has reached this state attains *bhakti* towards *Paramātman* (*parāṁ bhaktiṁ labhate*). Thereafter the aspirant comes to know *Paramātman* by means of *bhakti-yoga* in His true form and having thus known Him, he attains Him. The relevant verse reads:

> *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cā' smi tattvataḥ; tato māṁ tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram.*[54]

This verse is a reiteration of the teaching contained in the verses 53-54 of eleventh *adhyāya*[55] which state that by no other means than *ananya bhakti* it is possible to know *Paramātman* in His full form, obtain His full vision and attain Him in the state of *mokṣa.* As explained in chapter 18, it is only through *bhakti-yoga* that it is possible to atttain *Paramātman* and not by mere realization of the identity of *jīva* and *Paramātman. Jñāna, darśana* and *praveśa* referred to in this verse are three distinct stages of *bhakti-yoga. Praveśa* is the actual attainment of *Paramātman* in the state of *mokṣa* and it comes only after *darśana* or the full vision of the *Paramātman* is obtained through *ananya bhakti.*

The Nature and Components of Bhakti-yoga

Regarding the nature and components of *bhakti-yoga,* it is summed up in the following significant verse:

> *manmanā bhava madbhakto madyāji māṁ namaskuru;*
> *mām evaiśyasi yuktvai' vam ātmānaṁ matparāyaṇah.* IX.34
> Fix your mind on Me. Be devoted to Me. Worship Me. Bow down to Me. Engaging yourself in this manner and regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, you will reach (attain) Me.

As explained in chapter 9, this verse refers to three important concepts, which constitute the features of *bhakti-yoga.* These are: *manana, yajana* and *namaskāra. Manana* denotes *dhyāna* or meditation on *Paramātman* by focusing one's mind on Him. This is the same as *upāsanā* or *nididhyāsana* enjoined in the Upaniṣad. The term *bhakti* is derived from the root word *bhaj,* which means *sevā* or meditation (*bhaj sevāyām*). According to the *Nighaṇṭu* (glossary of Vedic terms), the terms *sevā, bhakti* and *upāsti* bear the same meaning. *Bhakti* is therefore synonymous with *upāsanā.* In common usage it is understood in the sense of love towards the respected person (*mahanīya viṣaye prītiḥ*). *prīti* is a state of knowledge, a mental disposition. *Bhakti* with reference to God therefore means unceasing meditation with intense love for the Supreme Being (*snehapūrvam anudhyānam*[56]). It is in this sense the *Gītā* employs the word *bhakti.*[57]

Dhyāna denoted by the word *manana* does not mean mere meditation on an object as it is ordinarily understood. In the initial stage the mind is to be focused on an object of contemplation. This is known as *dhāraṇa* or concentration in the Yoga system. *Dhāraṇa* or concentration of mind presupposes invariably the mental purity to be secured by the cultivation of ethical virtues (*yama*), observance of religious duties (*niyama*), a steady posture (*āsana*), control of breath (*prāṇāyāma*) and control of sense organs (*pratyāhāra*).[58] After fulfilling all these requirements, the aspirant becomes qualified to undertake *dhyāna.* When *dhyāna* is perfected over a long period of practice, it culminates in obtaining the vision of the object of contemplation. This final stage of *yoga* practice is known as *samādhi* in Yoga system leading to the state of *kaivalya.* In the *Gītā,* the final stage of *bhakti-yoga* culminates in the *Paramātma-sākṣātkāra* or the attainment of *Paramātman,* who is the object of meditation.

Dhyāna or *manana* referred to in the *Gītā* thus implies the entire eightfold *yoga* discipline known as *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* in the *Yogasūtras* of Patañjali. Though the word *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is not explicitly mentioned in the *Gītā,* it is implied in the yogic technique laid down in the sixth *adhyāya* in connection with *jñāna-yoga.* The same technique in the form of the eightfold religio-spiritual discipline is to be adopted for the practice of *bhakti-yoga* for the attainment of *Paramātman. Dhyāna* thus signifies a constant and continuous reflection on the divine form. It is in this sense the *Vedāntāsūtra* uses the word *dhyāna* (*dhyānācca*). As Rāmānuja explains, the flow of thought towards God should be like an unbroken stream of oil poured from a vessel (*tailadhārāvat avicchinna smṛti santati rūpam*). This is what is intended in the expression *dhruvāsmṛti* used in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* for *dhyāna.* Śaṁkara also means by *dhyāna* constant and uninterrupted flow of thought like the stream of oil (*tailadhārāvat santataḥ avicchinna pratyayaḥ dhyānam*[59]).

The observance of this yogic discipline is to be undertaken along with devotion to *Paramātman* until the goal is achieved. The expression in the verse *madbhakto bhava* implies this unswerving devotion to God while performing *manana, yajana* and *namaskāra.*

Yajana is another important feature of *bhakti-yoga.* It implies that the devotee who practises *bhakti-yoga* should worship God in all possible ways. The root word *yaj* means *pūja* (*yaj pūjāyāṁ*). In the context of *bhakti-yoga* it refers to the various modes of worship of God as laid down in the Pāñcarātra treatises. It also includes the nine modes of worship mentioned in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* namely, *śravaṇa,* or listening to the glory of God, *kīrtana,* or singing His glory, *smaraṇa,* or contemplating His greatness, *pādasevana,* or offering worship to His feet, *arcana,* or offering flowers with recitation of His names, *vandana* or prostrating before God, *dāsya* or feeling utter dependence on God, *sakhyam* or loving disposition towards God and *ātma-nivedana* or surrendering oneself to God. In another context the *Gītā* also refers to the importance of *kīrtana, yatana* and *namaskāra.*[60] All these mental, physical and religious activities are to be carried on as part of *bhakti-yoga.* Just as *manana* or *dhyāna* is to be done with unswerving devotion (*madbhakto*), in the same way *yajana* too is to be performed with full devotion.

Namaskāra is the third important feature of *bhakti-yoga.* It generally means salutation to God. In the context of *bhakti-yoga,* it implies the development of the mental attitude towards God that the devotee is subservient to Him. It is a form of supplication arising from the realization that the *jīva* is a humble creature before the all powerful and merciful God. At every stage of the practice of *bhakti-yoga,* the aspirant is required to prostrate before God seeking His grace for the successful progress of the rigorous discipline without impediments.

The word *matparāyaṇa* signifies that the aspirant should at all the time feel that *Paramātman* is the only goal for him and that he cannot sustain himself without His compassion and grace.

From the foregoing account of the significance of the verse spelling out the features of *bhakti-yoga,* it follows that *bhakti-yoga* is a rigorous religio-spiritual discipline to be pursued rigorously until one attains the union with *Paramātman.* The *Gītā* assures that the aspirant, who follows this pathway in the manner described in the verse, will surely attain *Paramātman* (*mamevaiṣyasi*). Lord Kṛṣṇa says that his devotee will not perish (*na me bhaktaḥ praṇasyati*). In another context He says that having come to Me, these great souls do not get back to rebirth since they have reached the highest state of existence (*mām upetya punarjanma na vidyate*).[61] This is the Supreme Goal for which a devotee aspires and observes the *bhakti-yoga.*

Bhakti-yoga can also serve as a means for attainment of other goals such as *artha* or wealth, *aiśvarya* or heavenly prosperity and *kaivalya* or state of blissful existence of the self. Accordingly, the *Gītā* classifies the *bhaktas* or devotees into four groups namely *artha* or one who aspires for recovery of lost wealth, *arthārthī* or one who wishes to acquire material wealth, which he does not possess, *jijñāsu* or one who desires to attain the blissful state of one's own self (*jīvātman*) and *jñānī* or one who craves to attain God.[62] Of all these, *jñānī* is held in high esteem, because he is the one who observes meditation without any selfish purpose exclusively for attaining God, unlike the other three categories of devotees who have different aspirations. He is regarded by Lord Kṛṣṇa as his dearest (*atyartha priyaḥ*). The *bhakti-yoga* adopted as a direct means for *mokṣa* is therefore the best.

In connection with the consideration of the relative superiority of the *upāsanā* on *Paramātman* vis-à-vis the *upāsanā* on *akṣara brahma,* the *Gītā* points out that those devotees who meditate on *Paramātman* by focusing their mind on Him with supreme faith and with the craving to attain Him, are considered as the highest among the *yogīs* (*yuktatama*).[63] As we have explained in chapter 12, the *akṣara-brahma* refers to the *jīvātman* and not the undifferentiated higher

Brahman (*nirguṇa brahma*) as conceived by Śaṁkara, nor to the Goddess Śrī (*citprakṛti*) as maintained by Madhva. The *Gītā* uses the term *akṣara* in the eighth *adhyāya* to denote *jīvātman* and in this sense it is to be taken in the *adhyāya* XII. It thus follows that *Paramātmā upāsanā* or *bhakti-yoga* is superior to the *jñāna-yoga*, which is directed to the *jīvātma-sākṣātkāra*. There is no mention in the *Gītā* that the *jīvātman* is identical with *Paramātman* nor is there any mention of the *upāsanā* on *śrītattva* for the purpose of *mokṣa*.

IV. THE CONCEPT OF *PRAPATTI*

Along with *bhakti-yoga* as the means of attainment, the *Gītā* also mentions *śaraṇāgati*, also known as *prapatti*, or total surrender of one's self to God as the means of attainment of God. Thus in the concluding *adhyāya*, Lord Kṛṣṇa, after teaching *bhakti-yoga* as the important means of attainment of *Paramātman*, also tells Arjuna to resort to Him alone for refuge, abandoning all *dharmas* and that He will release him from all evils. The relevant verse reads:

> *sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇam vraja; ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ.*[64]
>
> Relinquishing all *dharmas*, seek Me alone for refuge. I shall release you from all sins. Do not grieve.

In the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy and religion, the doctrine of *śaraṇāgati* is accorded an important place. The total surrender of one's self to God with the firm conviction that he is the sole protector, the means and goal, is considered as an alternative and direct means to *mokṣa* for persons who are incapable of observing the rigorous *bhakti-yoga*. This doctrine in all its details is not presented in the *Gītā*. The single verse coming after mentioning *bhakti-yoga* as the final teaching, does not appear, prima facie, to support the theory of *śaraṇāgati* as an alternative direct means to *mokṣa*. Rāmānuja also in his commentary on this verse does not take this stance. Neither Śaṁkara nor Madhva admit *śaraṇāgati* as a direct means to *mokṣa*. Its advocacy in the *Gītā*, as stated by Rāmānuja is, therefore, intended to serve as an aid to *bhakti-yoga* for the purpose of overcoming the obstacles standing in the way of practising *bhakti-yoga*. However, Rāmānuja in his work known as *Śaraṇāgati-gadya* has advanced the theory of *śaraṇāgati* as the direct and alternative means to *mokṣa* for those persons who are absolutely incapable of observing *bhakti-yoga* (*akiñcana*) and who have no other means of seeking protection for themselves (*ananyagati*). Vedānta Deśika, his illustrious follower, has taken the view in his commentary on *Gītābhāṣya*, that the *Gītā* verse implicitly teaches *śaraṇāgati* as an alternative direct means to *mokṣa*. So also, other Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas have accepted the *Gītā* verse, which is regarded as *carama śloka*, as the source of authority for advocating *śaraṇāgati* as a direct means to *mokṣa*. But, in the context of detailed exposition of *sādhana* comprising *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* right up to the v. 65 of eighteenth *adhyāya*, it appears appropriate to take *śaraṇāgati* as an aid to *bhakti-yoga*. Otherwise, the advocacy of *bhakti-yoga* as aided by *karma-yoga* as direct means to the Supreme Goal would lose its importance. However, it may be admitted that the theory of *śaraṇāgati* as an alternative direct *upāya* to *mokṣa* for persons who are incapable of observing the rigorous *bhakti-yoga*, is implied in the final teaching of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as maintained by Vedānta Deśika, even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the *Gītā*.

The concept of *prapatti* is also referred to in two other contexts in the *Gītā*. In the first *adhyāya*, Arjuna surrenders to Lord Kṛṣṇa to enlighten him when he was overtaken by compassion and confusion. But this self-surrender is not for the purpose of *mokṣa*. In the seventh *adhyāya*, *prapatti* is referred to in connection with the method of overcoming *māyā* of the Lord, which eclipses the knowledge about *Paramātman*. Thus the *Gītā* says: *māmeva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te.*[65] "This divine *māyā* of mine consisting of the three *guṇas* is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in me alone cross beyond it."

As we have explained in chapter 7, the *prapatti* in this verse implies the seeking of the grace of God, by worshipping Him to overcome the ignorance which obstructs the true knowledge of *Paramātman*. The question of *prapatti* as means to *mokṣa* does not arise here.

In another context in the eighteenth *adhyāya*, Arjuna is told to flee unto Lord Kṛṣṇa for shelter with the whole of his being and that by His grace he will obtain supreme peace and eternal abode.[66] It is not clear whether or not this teaching about *śaraṇaṁ gaccha* in a general way, is meant to emphasize that *śaraṇāgati* is the means to *mokṣa*. Rāmānuja himself indicates that it is for the purpose of overcoming *māyā* or the ignorance, which has clouded Arjuna's wisdom regarding the need to fight the war as a *dharma*.

Thus according to the teaching of the *Gītā*, *śaraṇāgati* is an important aid to *bhakti-yoga* prescribed for the purpose of overcoming the obstacles in the way of practising rigorous *bhakti-yoga.*

V. THE ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS PREREQUISITES

As part of the *sādhana* to be pursued for the attainment of *mokṣa,* the *Gītā* advocates the cultivation of several ethical virtues and also the strict observance of certain religious acts. Though these are not mandatory like the *nitya* and *naimittika karmas,* they are considered as essential prerequisites for the successful accomplishment of the yogic *sādhana* to attain the spiritual goal. The *Gītā* has therefore devoted special attention to this subject. Throughout the *Gītā* we come across several verses in most of the *adhyāyas* which repeatedly emphasise the importance of the ethical and religious values. Though there are no disputed issues regarding this subject among the commentators, it is important to take note of them to understand the nature of the *sādhana* in its complete form.

In the Yoga system of Patañjali, the ethical virtues and religious observances are grouped together under the broad headings of *yamas* and *niyamas,* which constitute the first two limbs of the eight-fold *yoga* discipline. The *yama* comprises, according to the *Yoga-sūtra,* the five ethical principles viz.,*ahiṁsā* or non-violence, *satya* or speaking of truth, *asteya* or non-stealing, *brahmacarya* or observance of celibacy and *aparigraha* or free from the longing for possession.[67] The *niyama* comprises *śauca* or cleanliness of body and mind, *santoṣa* or self-contentment, *tapas* or the austerities, *svādhyāya* or the study of the sacred texts and *Īśvarapraṇidhāna* or worship of God with devotion.[68] All these are the essential requirements to be complied with by a *yogī* for achieving mental stability which is needed for concentration and meditation on the self. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* also refers to the development of the ethical virtues for knowing Brahman such as *śama* or calmness, *dama* or control of senses, *uparati* or inner satisfaction, *titikṣu* or patience and *samāhitatva* or equanimity.[69] As stated by the *Vedāntāsūtra* based on this Upaniṣadic text, the cultivation of the virtues such as *śama, dama,* etc., is an essential prerequisite for the observance of the *upāsanā* or meditation on Brahman as these are enjoined by the scriptural text as an aid (*aṅga*) of *upāsanā.*[70]

While the *Gītā* covers all these points referred to in the *Yoga-sūtras,* Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntāsūtra,* it goes a step further by enunciating in greater detail several other ethical and religious principles as part of the *sādhana.* We may take note of the important ones and their philosophic significance.

As we have pointed out in the section on the theory of *karma-yoga,* the *Gītā* advocates the development of the spirit of disinterestedness in the performance of the prescribed deeds by the renunciation of the desire for the fruits of action and also the abandonment of the attachment to the deeds as the agent of action. This is a distinctive feature of *niṣkāma-karma* brought out in the *Gītā* and it is very useful to secure the purity of mind (*sattva-śudhi*) and the state of steadfastness in the knowledge of the self known as *sthitaprajñatā.* It helps to develop the mental tranquillity (*praśānta manas*) and the mental capacity to remain unperturbed by the pleasure or pain and success or failure.

In connection with the observance of *jñāna-yoga,* which is an important part of the *sādhana,* the *Gītā* lays special emphasis on the control of the mind and the sense organs (*indriya nigraha*). This is very essential for overcoming the two greatest obstacles standing in the way of *yoga* practice viz., *kāma* or desire for objects of pleasure and *krodha* or anger when desires are not fulfilled. Both cause mental disturbance, which is the greatest hindrance to the *yoga* practice. Hence the *Gītā* repeatedly emphasizes the need to control the *indriyas* including the mind.

The cultivation of *bhakti* or loving devotion to God by the spiritual aspirant is the most important requirement for pursuing not only *bhakti-yoga* but also the pathways of *karma* and *jñāna. Bhakti* which is defined as *prīti* or love towards the respected (*mahanīya viṣaye prītiḥ*), is a mental disposition. It needs to be developed intensively in the form of constant and continuous meditation on *Paramātman* with the conviction that He is the Supreme Ruler and the Supreme Goal. The *Gītā* lays special emphasis on the *ananya-bhakti* or the unswerving *bhakti* towards God as the only direct means to attain Him (*bhaktyā tu ananyayā labhyaḥ*).

Besides the specific prerequisites for the observance of the *sādhana* comprising *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga,* the *Bhagavadgītā* enumerates a large number of mental qualities to be cultivated by the aspirant for *mokṣa.* These are: non-hatred towards all beings (*adveṣṭa*), friendliness and compassion towards others (*maitrī* and *karuṇā*), being free from egoism and self-sense (*nirmama nirahṁkāra*), even-mindedness in pain and pleasure (*samaduḥkha-sukhaḥ*), patience (*kṣamā*), to be ever content (*santuṣṭaḥ*), self-controlled (*yatātma*), to remain unshakable in determination (*dṛḍhaniścayaḥ*).[71]

Such a person who is able to develop these mental qualities is considered as dear to God. He is regarded as one who behaves alike to foe and friend, also to good and evil repute and who is alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain and who is free from attachment.[72]

In another context, the *Gītā* enumerates several other ethical virtues to be developed for the purpose of developing *ātma-jñāna*. These are: humility (*amānitvam*), integrity (*adambhitvam*), non-violence (*ahiṁsā*), patience (*kṣāntiḥ*), uprightness (*ārjavam*), adoration of the preceptor (*ācāryopāsanaṁ*), purity of mind and body (*śaucaṁ*), steadfastness, (*sthairyam*), self-cotrol (*ātmavinigraha*), indifference to the objects of sense (*indriyartheṣu vairāgyam*), and non-attachment (*asaktiḥ*).[73]

Besides the cultivation of the ethical and religious values, the *Gītā* lays special emphasis on the development of divine nature named as *daivī saṁpat,* strict adherence to the dictates of the sacred texts (*śāstra-vidhi*), and in particular, *śraddhā* or faith in the observance of the religious acts. Two *adhyāya*s titled *Daivāsurasaṁpadvibhāga-yoga* (XVI) and *Śraddhātrayavibhāga-yoga* (XVII) are exclusively devoted to this subject and they present an elaborate account of these points. The *Gītā* describes in detail the characteristics of two types of individuals born in the world with two kinds of mental disposition named as *daivī-saṁpat* or divine nature and *āsurī-saṁpat* or demoniac nature. It also enumerates the mental qualities of these two types of individuals. The qualities of the persons of divine disposition are non-violence, truth, freedom from anger, tranquillity, compassion to living beings, freedom from covetousness, modesty, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from malice and pride. The qualities of the demoniac persons are ostentation (*dambha*), arrogance, excessive pride, anger, harshness and ignorance.[74] The purpose of this classification of human beings into two distinct categories with reference to their innate mental dispositions is to help the seekers of *mokṣa* to cultivate such qualities as would be conducive to attain liberation from bondage and eschew qualities which would stand as obstruction for the realization of the spiritual goal. According to the *Gītā*, the three important mental qualities which are to be abandoned are *kāma* or passion, *krodha* or anger and *lobha* or greed. Thus it says:

> *trividhaṁ narakasye' daṁ dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ; kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmāt etat trayaṁ tyajet.*[75]
> Passion, anger and greed—this is the threefold root cause of this hell (in the form of demoniac nature) which lead to the ruin of the soul. Therefore one should abandon these three.

The *Gītā* also emphasizes the need of *śraddhā* or earnest faith in whatever religious acts one performs. All the religious and secular activities are classified into three kinds viz., *sāttvika, rājasika* and *tāmasika,* based on the three *guṇas* which influence the mental disposition of an individual. The religious acts characterized as *sāttvika* confer good results. The *Gītā* says: "Whatever offering is made, whatever austerity is practised and whatever rite is observed, without faith it is called *asat,* it is of no value here or hereafter."

> *aśraddhayā hutaṁ dattaṁ tapas taptaṁ kṛtaṁ ca yat; asad ity ucyate pārtha na ca tat pretya no iha.*[76]

Another important point which is emphasized by the *Gītā* in connection with *sādhana* is strict adherence to the dictates of the Śāstra or the sacred texts. The main cause of moral degeneration is the lack of reverence to Śāstra.
Thus says Lord Kṛṣṇa:

> *yaḥ śāstravidhim utsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ; na siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim.*[77]
> He who discards the scriptural injunctions and acts as desires prompt him, he does not attain either perfection or happiness or the highest goal.

The reason for enjoining obedience to Śāstra is that it is the only authority for determinig what should be done and what should be avoided (*śāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te kāryā'kārya vyavasthitau*). The term *śāstra* does not merely mean the Vedas but also it covers all its ancillaries such as Smṛtis, Purāṇas, Dharmaśāstras. It is necessary for one to rely upon the sacred texts to understand the means to be adopted to attain the Supreme Goal. Thus it follows that *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* including *prapatti* taught in the *Bhagavadgītā* as the *sādhana* for *mokṣa* are laid down in the Śāstra. For the successful practice of the prescribed *sādhana* one should adopt the proper way of life involving the cultivation of ethical virtues and avoidance of the evil ways which are detrimental to the attainment of the spiritual goal.

REFERENCES

1. *BG,* II.43, *kamātmanaḥ svargaparā janma karma phalapradām.*
2. Ibid., II.39, *buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmabandhaṁ prahāsyasi.*
3. Ibid., IV.25-32.
4. Ibid., IV.32, *evaṁ bahuvidhā yajñā vitatā bramhaṇo mukhe; karmajān viddhi tān sarvān evaṁ jñātvā vimokṣyase.* The word *karmajān* implies that the different types of *karma-yoga* are to be preceded by the performance of *nitya* and *naimittika karma.*
5. Ibid., II.47.
6. Ibid., II.51, *karmajam buddhi-yuktā hi phalaṁ tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ; janma bandha vinirmuktāḥ padaṁ gacchanti anāmayam.*
7. Ibid., III.30, *mayi sarvāṇi karmani saṁnyasya adhyātma cetasā, nirāsīr nirmamo bhūtvā yuddhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ.*
8. Ibid., III.31, *ye me mataṁ idaṁ nityam anutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ; śraddhāvanto anasūyanto mucyate te'pi karmabhiḥ.*
9. Ibid., II.39, *eṣā te abhihitā sāṁkhye buddhir yoge tv imāṁ śruṇu.*
10. Ibid., VII.2, *jñānaṁ tehaṁ savijñānam idaṁ vakṣyāmi aśeṣataḥ.*
11. Ibid., VI.7, *arurukṣoḥ muner yogam karma kāraṇam ucyate; yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate.*
12. Ibid., XVIII.5.
13. *Br., Up.,* IV.4-22, *tametam vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasā anāśakena.*
14. *VS,* III.4-26.
15. *BG,* III.19.
16. Ibid., XVIII.6.
17. Ibid., V.4, *sāṁkhya yogau pṛthag bālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ.*
18. Ibid., V.5, *yat sāṁkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṁ tat yogairapi gamyate; ekaṁ sāṁkhyaṁ ca yogaṁ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati.*
19. Ibid.;, V.11, *yoginaḥ karma kurvanti sāṅgaṁ tyaktvā ātma-śuddhaye.*
20. Ibid., II.53, see also *TC* on RB for the explanation of the term *samādhi* and *yoga.*
21. Ibid., IV.18.
22. Ibid., V.12, *yuktaḥ karma phalaṁ tyaktvā śāntim āpnoti niṣṭhikīṁ.*
23. Ibid., V.6.
24. Ibid., V.7, *yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ; sarva-bhūtātma bhūtātmā....*
25. Ibid., XIII.24, *dhyānena ātmani paśyanti kecit ātmānam ātmanā; anye sāṁkhyena yogena karma-yogena cā'pare.*
26. Ibid., III.3, *jñānayogena sāṁkhyānāṁ karmayogena yogināṁ.*
27. Ibid., VII.1, *jñānam tehaṁ savijñānam idaṁ vakṣyāmi*: here *jñāna* means *paramātmajñāna.*
28. Ibid., II.39, *eṣā te'bihitā sāṁkhye buddhir yoge tvimāṁ śṛṇu.*
29. See *Gītārthasaṁgraha-rakṣā,* v.23.
30. *BG,* II.53, *samādhau acalā buddhis tadā yogam avapsyasi.* Here the word *yoga* refers to the goal.
31. Ibid., III.9, *yajñārthāt karmaṇo'nyatra lokoyam karma bandhanaḥ.*
32. Ibid., III.20, *karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitāḥ janakādayaḥ.*
33. Ibid., III.37, *kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajo guṇa samudbhavaḥ; mahāśano mahāpāpmā vidhyenam iha vairiṇam.*
34. Ibid., V.6, *saṁnyāsastu mahābāho duḥkam āptum ayogataḥ.*

35. Ibid., XVIII.11, *na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṁ tyaktuṁ karmāṇi aśeṣataḥ; yastu karma phala tyāgī sa tyāgī' ti abhidhīyate.*
36. See MB on *BG,* VI.1, *caturthāśramiṇo py agniḥ kriyā co'ktā; agnir brahma ca, tatpūjā kriyā nyāsāśrame smṛtā ti ca.*
37. *BG,* III.3, *lokesmin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā anagha; jñāna yogena sāṁkhyānāṁ karma yogena yogināṁ.*
38. Ibid., V.5.
39. Ibid., VI.11-14.
40. Ibid., VI.15, *yuñjan evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī niyata mānasaḥ; śāntim nirvāṇa-paramāṁ matsaṁsthāṁ adhigacchati.*
41. Ibid., VI.20.
42. Ibid., VI.27-28, *upaiti śānta rajasaṁ bramha-bhūtam akalmaṣam; yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogi vigata kalmaṣaḥ; sukhena brahma-saṁsparśam atyantaṁ sukham aśnute.*
43. Ibid., XVIII.52-53.
44. Ibid., XVIII.54, *bramha bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati; samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktim labhate parāṁ.*
45. See *TC* on *BG,* VI.30, *ekavyaktidarśanena vyaktantaramapi iti arthaḥ.*
46. *BG,* V.18, *vidyāvinayasaṁpanne brāmhaṇe gavi hastini; śuni cai'va śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ.*
47. Ibid., VIII.21.
48. Ibid., VI.47.
49. Ibid., XI.53-54. See also *infra,* n. 50.
50. Ibid., XI.53-54, *nā'ham vedair na tapasā na dānena na ce'jyayā; śakya evaṁvidho draṣṭuṁ dṛṣṭavān asi māṁ yathā. Bhaktyā tu ananyayā śakya aham evaṁ vidhor'-juna; jñāntuṁ draṣṭuṁ ca tattvena praveṣṭuṁ ca paraṁtapa.*
51. Ibid., IX.33.
52. Ibid., XIII.24.
53. Ibid., XVIII.49-55.
54. Ibid., XVIII.55. See also *supra,* ch. 18, pp. 188-90.
55. See *supra,* n. 50. See also *supra,* ch. 11, pp. 119-20.
56. See *Śrutaprakāśikā* on RB, *snehapārvam anudhyānam bhaktiriti abhidhīyate.*
57. Cf., *BG,* X.10, *teṣāṁ satatayuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ prīti pūrvakam.*
58. See *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* VI.7-91, *tadrūpapratyaye caikā santatiśca anyanispṛha; tadhyānaṁ prathamaiḥ ṣaḍbhiḥ aṅgaiḥ niṣpādyate tathā.*
59. SB on *BG,* XIII.24. See also MB, *premapravāho bhaktiḥ*
60. *BG,* IX.14.
61. Ibid., VIII.16.
62. Ibid., VII.16, *caturvidhā bhajante māṁ janāḥ sukṛtino'ṛjuna; ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha.*
63. Ibid., XII.2.
64. Ibid., XVIII.66.
65. Ibid., VII.14.
66. Ibid., XVIII.62, *tameva śaraṇaṁ gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata; tatprasādāt parāṁ śāntiṁ sthānam prāpsyasi śāśvatam.*
67. *Yogasūtra,* II.30, *ahiṁsā satyam asteya brahmacarya aparigrahaḥ yamāḥ.*
68. Ibid., II.32, *śauca santoṣa tapas svādhyāya Īśvarapraṇidhāna niyamāḥ.*
69. *Bṛ. Up.,* VI.4-23, *tasmad evaṁ vit śānto dānta uparataḥ titikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvā ātmanyeva ātmānaṁ paśyati.*
70. See *VS,* III.4-4, *śama damādi upetasyāt tathāpi tad-vidheḥ tadaṅgatayā teṣām avaśya*

anuṣṭeyatvāt.

71. *BG*, XII.13-14, *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca; nirmamo nirahaṁkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣami. Saṁtuṣṭaḥ satatam yogi yatamāna dṛḍhaniścayaḥ. . . .*
72. Ibid., XII.18.
73. Ibid., XIII.7-9, . . . *amānitvam adambhitvam ahiṁsā kṣāntir ārjavam; ācāryopāsanaṁ śaucaṁ sthairyam ātmavinigrahaḥ . . . indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam . . . asaktiḥ. . . .*
74. Ibid., XVI.2-5.
75. Ibid., XVI.21.
76. Ibid., XVII.28.
77. Ibid., XVI.23.

CHAPTER 21

The Doctrine of *Parama-puruṣārtha*

In the preceding two chapters we have presented two major doctrines of Vedānta viz.,*tattvas* covering *Paramātman, jīvātman* and the universe and *sādhana* comprising *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga.* As a philosophical work, the *Gītā* also deals with the doctrine of *parama-puruṣārtha* or the Supreme Goal. The knowledge of the Reality and the means of its attainment would be of value if only there is a worthy higher goal to be attained. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* states that the knower of Brahman attains the Supreme. This signifies that the knowledge of Brahman leads to the Supreme Spiritual Goal. The present chapter is devoted to the consideration of the nature of the Supreme Goal as conceived by the *Gītā.*

The Theory of Bondage

As we have observed earlier, the main objective of the *Gītā* is to expound the ways and means of attaining liberation from bondage. The bondage is caused by the association of the soul with a physical body which is a modification of the *prakṛti.* Since both the soul and *prakṛti* are beginningless (*anādi*), bondage too is *anādi.* But it has an end and the liberation from it comes with the dawn of the knowledge of the true nature of *Paramātman* after the pursuit of the prescribed *sādhana.* The body and the sense organs including the mind are constituted of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti* and these are responsible for the experience of pleasure and pain by the individual self (*puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān*).[1] According to the *Gītā,* the souls abiding in the different kinds of bodies of living beings become attached to the happiness, pain, etc., arising from the influence of the *guṇas.* Consequently, the individuals perform virtuous or sinful deeds. In order to experience the fruits of the good and evil deeds, they are born again and again to reap the consequences of good or bad deeds of the previous lives. This accounts for the transmigration of the soul through several births and deaths in accordance with the good and bad deeds performed in earlier lives.

The *Gītā* gives a graphic description of the nature of the bondage through the metaphor of the peepal tree (*aśvattha*) with a view to creating a desire for the spiritual aspirant to strive for liberation from bondage. The *aśvattha* tree is described as having its root above and the branches below (*ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham aśvatthaṁ prāhur avyayam*).[2] The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* also makes a similar statement.[3] The tree with roots above signifies that the bondage in the form of cosmic process of births and deaths has its origin in *Caturmukha Brahmā*, who as the creator, is above the universe. The spread of the branches downwards implies the variety of living beings in the universe. It is regarded as *avyaya* or imperishable in the sense that it is a continuous process like the flow of the water in the river. It is also stated that the branches of the tree extend below and above, nourished by the *guṇas*, with the sense objects for its twigs. Its secondary roots extend downwards resulting in actions, which cause bondage in the world of human beings. The secondary roots spreading downwards represent the *vāsanās* or the innate tendencies, which the souls carry as a result of the past deeds. In accordance with one's past deeds, the souls take births in the higher realms as Devas, Gandharvas, etc., and also in the lower realms as men, beasts, etc. The effects of actions done in the human state bring about further conditions of men down below and of divinities up above.

An aspirant for *mokṣa* needs to escape from the bondage. The *Gītā* says in a characteristic way that the firmly rooted cosmic tree is to be cut off by a sharp sword of detachment through the means of right knowledge. In another context, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he having entered this impermanent sorrowful world should worship Him (*anityam asukhaṁ lokam imaṁ prāpya bhajasvā mām*).[4] He also says specifically that one should seek that goal from which one does not return to this world after it is reached.

The Nature of the Supreme Goal

Regarding the nature of the goal to be attained, the *Gītā* mentions in one of the verses that it is the Supreme Abode of the Lord from which, when reached, one will never return (*yad-gatvā na nivartante taddhāma paramaṁ mama*).[5] It is not clear what this abode is. Śaṁkara takes it as the abode of Viṣṇu, referred to in the

Kaṭhopaniṣad (*tad-viṣṇoḥ paramam padam*).[6] In connection with the practice of *jñāna-yoga,* it is said that the *yogins* who are freed from the bonds of birth reach a sorrowless state (*janma-bandha vinirmuktāḥ padaṁ gacchanti anāmayam*).[7] In another context, the *Gītā* says that those who focuses their mind on the self as their goal, they would reach the state from which there is no return to the mundane existence, their sins having been washed away by *jñāna* (*gacchanti apunarāvṛttiṁ jñānanirdhūta kalmaṣāh*).[8] In connection with the practice of *bhakti-yoga,* Lord Kṛṣṇa says that the great souls, having come to Me, do not get back to rebirth, the place of suffering and impermanence, for they have reached the highest perfection (*nā'pnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhim paramām gataḥ*). He also tells Arjuna that from the realm of Brahmā downwards, all worlds are subject to return to rebirth but on reaching Me, there is no return to rebirth again (*māṁ upetya punarjanma na vidyate*).[9] In connection with the teaching of *bhakti-yoga,* it is explicitly stated that those who follow this pathway surely attain only *Paramātman* (*mām eva aiṣyasi*). In the same context, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that through *bhakti* the devotees come to know Me in my true form and then having known Me, they forthwith enter Me (*bhaktyā mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tadantaram*). All these statements reveal that according to the *Gītā* the final goal to be attained is the attainment of *Paramātman.* In other words, the union of the individual self with *Paramātman* is the ultimate spiritual goal by attaining which one crosses the ocean of bondage.

The words *āpnuvanti, aiṣyasi, viśanti, upaiti* used in these statements convey the idea that *jīva* as the aspirant for *mokṣa* remains in a state of existence free from the bondage along with *Paramātman,* who is the object of attainment, without losing its individuality. This view of the *Gītā* conforms to the teaching of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* which states that *jīva* after having got rid of the evil of bondage attains a status of equality with Brahman (*nirañjanaḥ paramaṁ sāmyam upaiti*).[10]

In connection with the teaching of the method of redemption from bondage, Lord Kṛṣṇa says: *idaṁ jñānam upāśritya mama sādharmyam āgatāḥ; svarge' pi no' pajāyante pralaye na vyathayanti ca.*[11] "Having resorted to this knowledge and attaining a status similar to Mine, they are not born at the time of creation, nor do they suffer at the time of dissolution." The term *sādharmya* employed in this verse describes the nature of the attainment as a status similar to that of *Paramātman.* That is, similarity in respect of certain attributes (*samāna-dharmatā*). It does not mean, as interpreted by Śaṁkara, the identity with the Supreme Lord (*matsvarūpatā*), since according to the *Gītā* the *jīvātman* is different from *Īśvara.* The *jīvātman* in the state of *mukti* attains a status similar to that of *Paramātman* in respect of purity by becoming free from evil and also *jñāna* and *ānanda.*

We also come across a few statements in the *Gītā* which suggest that *jīva* after it is liberated, attains the status of Brahman, that is, it becomes one with Brahman (*brahma-bhāva* or *brāhmīsthiti*). In the second *adhyāya,* it is stated that the *sthitaprajña* or the one who is steadfast in the knowledge of the *ātman,* attains the state of *brāhmīsthiti* which means, according to Śaṁkara, the state of being established in Brahman, that is, to remain as identical with Brahman after renouncing all actions. Such a person attains *brahma-nirvāṇa* or *mokṣa* in the sense of realization of oneself as identical with Brahman. We have discussed this matter in chapter 2 and as observed therein, *brāhmīsthiti* and *brahma-nirvāṇa* do not imply the identity of *jīva* and Brahman in the state of *mokṣa* for the reason that the *Gītā* does not support the theory of identity. In the context of the teaching about the true nature of *jīvātman* as distinct from the body to remove the delusion of Arjuna, *brāhmīsthiti* and *brahma-nirvāṇa* of a *sthitaprajña* refer to the attainment of the state of blissful *jīvātman.*

In the fifth *adhyāya* also, the *Gītā* in connection with the description of the characteristics of a *yogī* mentions that such a person attains the beatitude of Brahman (*sa yogī brahma-nirvāṇaṁ brahmabhūto adhigacchati*).[12] It is possible to take this verse in favour of *jīvātman* becoming Brahman, as Śaṁkara interprets. But as explained in chapter 5, the correct implication of this verse in the context of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga,* is that the *yogī* experiences the bliss of *jīvātman.*

Again, in the eighteenth *adhyāya,* the *Gītā* states that the *yogī* (*jñāna-yogī*) who has conquered the senses and mind becomes *brahmabhūya* (*vimucya nirmamaḥ śāntaḥ brahmabhūyāya kalpate*). The word *brahmabhūya* may be interpreted to mean that the *yogī* becomes Brahman. As we have poined out in chapter 18, this interpretation would not be tenable since according to the *Gītā,* the *jīva* and Brahman are not essentially the same. Besides, if *jīvātman* is the object of meditation in *jñāna-yoga,* the realization of it does not amount to the realization of *Paramātman* or Brahman. Further in the subsequent verse, it is said that he who has become *brahmabhūta,* attains *paraṁ bhakti* by means of which *Paramātman* is attained. If *jīva* itself is *Paramātman* and if He is already attained by *jñāna-yoga,* the need of His attainment through *paraṁ bhakti* does not arise.

A similar statement appears in the fourteenth *adhyāya* where it is stated that one who worships God with unswerving devotion (*bhakti-yoga*) crosses the *guṇas* and becomes *brahmabhūya.*[13] The word *brahmabhuya* may mean, as Śaṁkara interprets, to become Brahman, which is regarded as *mokṣa.* But as explained in chapter 15, this meaning would not be tenable, since in the subsequent verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that He is the Abode of Brahman (*brahmaṇo' hi pratiṣṭhāham*). Lord Kṛṣṇa as Brahman cannot Himself be the Brahman. Hence the word *brahma* in this verse denotes *jīva* and *brahma-bhāva* means that the devotee becomes fit to realize the true nature of *jīvātman.* Thus, we do not find any support in the *Gītā* for the theory of the realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman (*atmaikya-jñāna*) as the Supreme Goal. On the contrary, the *Gītā* emphasizes *sādharmya* or the attainment of a status similar to that of *Paramātman* as the Supreme Goal.

The Theory of Kaivalya

Besides the attainment of *Paramātman,* which is the Supreme Goal, the *Gītā* also admits the state of existence for the *jīvātman* in its true form totally dissociated with the physical body as a higher spiritual goal, corresponding to the state of *kaivalya* accepted by the *sāṁkhya-yoga* system. Though the word *kaivalya* is not mentioned in the *Gītā,* it is implied in the verses referring to the meditation by the category of devotees named as *jijñāsu* or one desirous of realizing *jīvātman* in its true form as totally dissociated with the body (*prakṛtiviyukta ātma-svarūpa avāptim icchuḥ*). This is the one of the four types of devotees viz., *ārta, jijñāsu, arthārthī,* and *jñānī,* who all worship *Paramātman.* The word *jijñāsu* literally means one who desires to know the Reality, which may be either *jīvātman* or *Paramātman.* The *jñānī* is the one who knows *Paramātman.* To make a distinction between these types of devotees, it is appropriate to take the word *jijñāsu* as the one who desires to realize the true nature of *jīvātman.* The goal of *jijñāsu* is naturally the attainment of the blissful state of *jīvātman,* which is regarded as *kaivalya* or the *kevalāvasthā.* The *jijñāsu* is therefore named by Rāmānuja as *kaivalyārthī.* The eighth *adhyāya* which describes the manner of meditation of different types of devotees draws a distinction between the one who meditates on *Paramātman* and the one who meditates on *akṣara-brahma,* which stands for *jīvātman* in its true nature, as explained in chapter 8. The *jñānī* who meditates on *Paramātman* by constantly thinking of Him as the Goal attains Him. The devotee who meditates on *akṣara-brahma* by controlling the senses and mind attains the highest state (*paramāṁ gati*), which contextually refers to the state of *kaivalya.* According to the *Gītā,* the individual who has reached this state does not return to *saṁsāra* (*yam prāpya na nivartante*).[14] It is described a *paramaṁ dhāma* of the Lord in the sense that it is a state under the control of *Paramātman* and hence there is no return to bondage when once it is attained. Thus, *kaivalya* is also a higher spiritual goal.

The remembrance of *Paramātman* at the time of death is considered important for attaining the desired goal. This is called the *antima-smṛti* or the final thought, which arises at the time of leaving the mortal body. Whatever form one remembers at the time of death, he attains that form only, being influenced by the thought of that form on which he meditates until the last moment.[15] Arjuna is therefore told to meditate on *Paramātman* by fixing his thought on Him and that he would surely attain Him (*mayy arpita mano-buddhir mām evai'ṣyasy asaṁśayaḥ*).[16]

The *Gītā* also briefly mentions the two pathways known in the Upaniṣads as the *arcirādi-mārga* and *dhūmra-mārga* through which the soul traverses to the higher realms after its exit from the body. The *arcirādi-mārga* comprises the realms presided by the celestial deities ruling *agni* or fire, light, days, the bright half of the month, and the six months of the northern course of the sun; and by traversing this path, the knowers of Brahman go to the abode of Viṣṇu and they do not return to the mundane existence. The *dhūmra-mārga* consists of the areas presided by the deities ruling smoke (*dhūmra*), night, the dark half of the month, six months of the southern course of the sun. Those who go through this path reach the realm of the moon and then return to the earth again to be reborn.

The *Gītā* also acknowledges the existence of the lower realms such as *svarga-loka* or the heavenly world, which is attained by those who acquire *puṇya* or merit by performing *yajñas,* etc., with a desire for specific fruits. This does not represent the Supreme Goal, since the souls, which attain these realms, return to the world of mortals when their merit is exhausted after having enjoyed the pleasure of the heaven (*kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokam viśanti*). Only those who meditate on *Paramātman* attain *brahmaloka*, the realm of Brahman. And when once it is attained, there is no return to the bondage. As the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* states and so also the *Vedāntasūtra*, they do not come back to the mundane existence (*na ca punarāvatate*). This is the *parama-puruṣārtha* or the Supreme Goal.

REFERENCES

1. *BG*, XIII.21.
2. Ibid.,XV.1.
3. See also *Kaṭha Up.*, II.3.1.
4. Ibid., IX.33.
5. Ibid., XV.6.
6. *Kaṭha Up.*, V.15.
7. *BG*, II.51.
8. Ibid., V.17.
9. Ibid., VIII.16.
10. *Muṇḍ. Up.*, III.1.3.
11. *BG*, XIV.2.
12. Ibid., V.24.
13. Ibid., XIV.26, *sa guṇān samatityān brahmabhūyāya kalpate.*
14. Ibid., VIII.21.
15. Ibid., VIII.6.
16. Ibid., VIII.7.

CHAPTER 22

General Evaluation and Conclusion

IN part I of the book we have presented the philosophical teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* as enshrined in each of the eighteen *adhyāyas.* While explaining the implications of the selected verses, we have stated the variations, wherever they exist, in respect of the interpretations advanced by the three principal commentators, Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva, on the basis of their accepted doctrines. This comparative analysis would reveal how this important religious classic, which is one of the basic source-books of Vedānta, is viewed so differently by the Vedānta exponents. This would also enable an unbiased reader to assess whether or not the main philosophical tenets advocated by the three schools of Vedānta are reflected in the original text.

In part II of the book, we have consolidated the various philosophical, theological and ethical thoughts scattered all over the *Gītā* and reconstructed them into coherent doctrines under the three broad headings viz., (1) *tattvas* covering *Paramātman, jīvātman* and *prakṛti,* (2) *sādhana* comprising *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga,* and (3) *puruṣārtha.* In this attempt, we have refrained, as far as possible, from being influenced by the views of any particular school of Vedānta. This objective presentation of the philosophical doctrines is considered to represent the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā.*

What is the nature of the philosophical system that is adumbrated in the *Bhagavadgītā?* This is the main question with which we are concerned in the present chapter. It is not an easy task to find an answer to it because this religious classic composed in simple verses employing terms which bear more than one meaning allows wide scope for different interpretations to fit with the doctrines advanced by the commentators. As may be observed in part I, even the common philosophical terms such as *ātman, brahma, akṣara, kṣetrajña, jñāna, yoga, nirvāṇa* etc., are not interpreted uniformly by the commentators. It therefore becomes difficult to determine the correct purport of the verses and also the soundness of the theories developed on the basis of the interpretation. We do not propose to go into the discussion of these points which have already been covered to some extent in part I. We shall confine our attention in the present chapter to the examination of the following major philosophical theories and the connected issues:

1. The Nature of *para-tattva* or the Ultimate Reality—whether it is the personal God of Religion or the impersonal undifferentiated Being.
2. The Nature of *jīvātman*—whether it is a distinct ontological spiritual entity different from Brahman or non-different from it.
3. The Status of the Universe—whether it is real or phenomenal in character.
4. The Theory of *sādhana*—the *karma-yoga* and its role in the *sādhana* for *mokṣa*; the *jñāna-yoga* and its role as the means to *mokṣa*; the *bhakti-yoga* and its role as the direct means to *mokṣa*.
5. The Nature of the Supreme Goal—whether it is the attainment of a status of equality with *Paramātman* by the *jīvātman* or it is the realization of the identity of *jīva* with Brahman.

The commentators maintain divergent views on these issues. They also claim that the views advanced by them are taught in the *Bhagavadgītā.* These views are also defended on the basis of the doctrines or premises advanced by them. In order to determine the correct views of the *Gītā,* it becomes necessary to examine whether the views of the commentators are philosophically tenable and whether the same are also supported by the *Gītā.* As the *Gītā* is one of the sourcebooks of Vedānta, we have also consider whether the view of the commentator conforms to the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra.* Another important criteria for evaluating the soundness of a theory, as far as the *Gītā* is concerned, is that the conclusion drawn on a specific teaching should also be contextually appropriate. For instance, if the subject-matter of a teaching of the *Gītā* is about *jīvātman,* an interpretation in favour of *Paramātman* cannot be taken as justifiable. On the basis of these considerations, we shall attempt to review the important theories outlined in the preceding chapters.

I. THE NATURE OF *PARA-TATTVA*

In chapter 19 we have given an outline of the theory of *Paramātman* as it is taught in the *Gītā*. It may be observed that the *Gītā* itself does not mention the concepts of *Para* Brahman and *Apara* Brahman or the two forms of Brahman as *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa*, as conceived by Advaita Vedānta. Nor does it enter into any dialectics on this subject. Throughout the *Gītā*, we come across only one concept of *Paramātman* who is equated with a personal God in the name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Nevertheless, Śaṁkara brings up this issue in his commentary on the *Gītā* on the assumption that the Upaniṣads, so also the *Vedāntāsūtra*, teaches this theory. Thus, in his commentary on the verse referring to *uttama puruṣa* designated as *Paramātmā*, who transcends *kṣara* and *akṣara puruṣa*, he brings in the concept of higher Brahman, which is regarded as the undifferentiated Being.[1] Similarly, while interpreting the verses referring to the *upāsanā* on *Paramātman* and also *upāsanā* on *akṣarabrahma*, he posits the theory of two Brahmans.[2] Both Rāmānuja and Madhva do not admit the theory of two Brahmans or even the two forms of Brahman as conceived by Śaṁkara. According to them neither the Upaniṣads nor the *Vedāntāsūtra* support this theory. As we have observed in chapter 19, even the *Gītā* does not specifically teach such a theory.

The *Paramātman* referred to in the *Gītā* is the one Supreme Being who is the primary cause of the universe, who is the sustainer and Inner Controller of all beings and who is endowed with attributes such as *jñāna, śakti, aiśvarya,* etc. This Supreme Being is not different from Lord Kṛṣṇa, as explained by the theory of *avatāra* or incarnation in the fourth *adhyāya*. The *Gītā* itself says that Lord Kṛṣṇa is *parama brahma* and that there is no Reality higher than Him (*mattaḥ parataraṁ na anyad kiṁcidasti*).[3] The assumption made by Śaṁkara regarding the existence of a higher Reality than the personal God portrayed in the *Gītā* is not therefore justifiable. Hence, Rāmānuja and Madhva are justified in claiming that the Supreme God designated as *Paramātmā, uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ* and Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva is the Ultimate Reality of the *Gītā* philosophy.

The view that the same *Para* Brahman as associated with *māyā* becomes *Īśvara* or the personal God is also not stated in the *Gītā*. Though the word *māyā* is mentioned in a few verses, it does not convey the sense of cosmic principle of illusion, as conceived by Advaita Vedānta. As will be observed later, *māyā* is equated with the *prakṛti* or the primordial cosmic matter constituted of three *guṇas, sattva, rajas* and *tamas* and it is regarded as distinct and real ontological entity belonging to the Supreme Lord, through which the variegated universe is evolved.

We also do not come across any statement in the *Gītā* similar to the Upaniṣadic texts such as *sadeva, ekameva, advitīya* on the basis of which the existence of one Absolute Reality with the denial of the reality of the *jīvas* and the universe can be claimed.

II. THE NATURE OF *JĪVĀTMAN*

The theory of *jīvātman* is a dominant subject in the *Gītā.* The knowledge of the nature of the self is considered necessary to remove the delusion caused to Arjuna by his mistaking the body itself as the self and also for the observance of *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* for attaining the spiritual goal. In all these teachings imparted to Arjuna, the *Gītā* acknowledges that *jīvātman* or *ātma-tattva* is a distinct ontological entity as different from *Paramātman.* However, Śaṁkara adopts the view that *jīvātman* is not a distinct real ontological entity but it is the empirical self,that is, Brahman itself as conditioned by the limiting adjuncts such as *antaḥkaraṇa* and the body caused by *avidyā.* On the basis of the doctrine of identity of *jīva* and Brahman, he interprets the verses referring to *jīvātman* in favour of *Paramātman.* Thus, at the very commencement of the *Gītā,* the verses about the eternality and indestructible character of *jīva* as contrasted with the perishable body, is explained on the assumption that *jīva* is essentially Brahman which is eternal. The plurality of the *jīvas* referred to in the verse is interpreted on the basis of the several *upādhis* or the limiting adjuncts in the form of several bodies. The realization of the individual self (*jīvātman*), which is the goal of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga,* is taken as the realization of the identity of Brahman and *jīva* (*ātmaikya-sākṣātkāra*). The *sāmyatva* or similarity in respect of all individual selves perceived by an enlightened *yogī* (*samadarśin*) is regarded as oneness of the self (*ātmaikya*). The attainment of *Paramātman* by the devotee through the observance of *bhakti-yoga* is interpreted as the realization of the identity of the *jīva* with Brahman. While we may not question all these interpretations of Śaṁkara in accordance with the accepted doctrine of the unity of the self, we have to examine whether this fundamental premise of Advaita is supported by the *Gītā.* Both according to Rāmānuja and

Madhva, this is not warranted in the *Gītā.* As we have observed in the chapter on *jīvātman,* the *Gītā* throughout emphasises the difference between *jīva* and *Paramātman.* We do not come across any verse in the *Gītā,* which explicitly states that *jīva* is essentially Brahman. The description of *jīva* as *aṁśa* of the Lord (*mamaivāṁśa*), as *parā prakṛti* of *Paramātman* and the immanence of the Supreme Being in the hearts (selves) of all beings as the Inner Controller and the attainment of *sādharmya* or equal status with *Paramātman* in the state of *mukti,* all convey the idea of real difference between the two ontological entities. The Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtras* also affirm difference between the two.

Only one verse in the thirteenth *adhyāya* dealing with *kṣetra* or body and *kṣetrajña* or the knower of the body (*jīva*), appears to convey the idea of *kṣetrajña* as identical with *Paramātman.* The relevant verse reads: *kṣetrajñaṁ cā' pi māṁ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata.*[4] It means: "Know Me also as the knower of the field in all fields." We have discussed the implication of this verse in chapter 13. As observed therein, it would be possible to speak of identity of *jīva* and *Paramātman,* if *jīva* were the empirical self, that is, Brahman as conditioned by the *antaḥkaraṇa* caused by *māyā.* But such a theory is not advocated by the *Gītā. Jīvas* are eternal spiritual entities, having no beginning or end, as stated in the second *adhyāya.* The Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra* also declare that *ātman* is *nitya.* Hence, the two ontological entities of different natures cannot be identical. The oneness referred to in the verse and also in the Upaniṣadic text such as *tattvamasi* is to be taken in the sense that the *Paramātman* who is immanent in *jīva* as its Inner Controller is inherently related to the *kṣetrajña* abiding in all beings. Thus, the fundamental premise of Śaṁkara that *jīva* and Brahman are non-different is not sustainable, according to the *Gītā.*

Madhva admits, like Rāmānuja, that *jīvātman* is different from *Paramātman.* But while explaining the relation of *jīva* to Brahman, he advances the theory of *bimba-pratibimba.* That is, *jīva* is regarded as the *pratibimba* or the prototype of *Paramātman,* who is the *bimba* or "ectype." The term *pratibimba* is used by Madhva in a technical sense to mean that which is similar to the *bimba* in respect of some attributes, while at the same time it is dependent on the *bimba* (*tadadhīnatve sati tatsadṛśatvam*). The *jīva* is similar to *Paramātman* in respect of attributes such as *jñāna* and *ānanda* but at the same time it is entirely dependent on it for its sustenance. On the basis of this theory, Madhva explains the relationship between *jīva* and *Paramātman.* The concept of *aṁśa* used in the *Gītā* and the *Vedānta-sūtra* to account for the relation of *jīva* to *Paramātman* is also interpreted by Madhva in the sense of *bimba* and *pratibimba.* According to Madhva, the knowledge of the true nature of *jīvātman* should include in it the knowledge of *Paramātman* and also the *bimba-pratibimba* relation. Thus, in connection with the teaching about the nature of *jīvātman* as eternal and indestructible in the second *adhyāya,* Madhva introduces the concept of *bimba-pratibimba,* though this idea is not even implied in the relevant verses. While we may not question the theory of *bimba-pratibimba,* we have to find out if this theory is mentioned in the *Gītā.* We do not come across any verse which explicitly refers to it. It is also not explicitly mentioned in the Upaniṣads. The term *aṁśa* used by the *Gītā* does not also convey the meaning of *pratibimba* in the sense understood by Madhva.

Rāmānuja adopts the concept of *śarīra-śarīribhāva* or the body-soul relation to explain the relationship between *jīva* and *Paramātman.* But this theory is based on the authority of the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* where it is explicitly stated that Brahman as the *antaryāmin* abides in all sentient beings and non-sentient entities and the latter are regarded as the *śarīra* or body in a metaphysical sense. By virtue of the immanence of Brahman in the *jīvas,* the latter are sustained and controlled by the former and in view of it the *jīvas* are regarded as the *śarīra* of Brahman, while Brahman as the counterpart of the *śarīra,* is named as *śarīri* or the Self, on the analogy of the body and soul. The *Vedānta-sūtra* also states that *jīva* is *aṁśa* of Brahman in the sense that *jīva* is an integral part of *Paramātman* as the two are inherently related as body to the soul.[5] This explanation is philosophically justified as otherwise the scriptural texts speaking of both difference and non-difference between the two ontological entities of different nature cannot be reconciled. The *Gītā* also describes *jīvas* as *aṁśa* of *Paramātman* to convey the intimate relationship between the two. The theory of *śarīra-śarīribhāva* advanced by Rāmānuja in interpreting some of the crucial verses of the *Gītā* is not therefore a postulate, but it is fully supported by the scriptural and Smṛti texts including the *Gītā.*

One other important theory about *jīva* on which the commentators have adopted divergent views is the *kartṛtva* or the capacity of *jīva* to function as an agent of action. The *Gītā* has devoted special attention to this subject since in the matter of the observance of the prescribed *sādhana, kartṛtva* is an important factor. The command to do a religious act is meaningful only in respect of an individual who has the freedom and the capacity to function on his own. In view of this the *Vedāntasūtra* states that *jīva* is *kartā,* as otherwise the Vedic commands have no significance (*kartā śāstrārthavatvāt*).[6] This *sūtra* is based on the *Praśnopaniṣad,* which explicitly states that *jīva* is *kartā.*[7] Rāmānuja accepts the *kartṛtva* of *jīva* in its proper sense. But Śaṁkara denies *kartṛtva* to *jīvātman* on the ground that *jīva* which is essentially Brahman is *niṣkriyā* or one devoid of any action. The admission of *kriyā* or action in respect of the immutable Self, according to Śaṁkara, would affect its unchanging character (*nirvikāratva*). Doership, is a *dharma* or characteristic of *antaḥkaraṇa* and this is falsely superimposed on the Self due to ignorance. The *kartṛtva* of *jīva* is therefore *aupādhika* or caused by *upādhi,* according to Śaṁkara.

Madhva, on the other hand, offers a different explanation. Though *jīva* is different from *Paramātman,* the latter is the primary agent of action (*pradhāna-kartā*), whereas *jīva* is only impelled to act by *Paramātman.* This explanation is advanced on the basis of the supposition that *jīva* as a *pratibimba* of *Paramātman* is entirely dependent on Him and that it has no freedom to act by itself. If *jīva* does not have the freedom to act and also the capacity to function by itself and if *Paramātman* is the main *kartā,* it would amount to the admission of *kartṛtva* for *jīva* in a figurative or secondary sense. Thus, both the views of Śaṁkara and Madhva would go against the teaching of the Upaniṣad and the *Vedāntasūtra,* which admit *kartṛtva* in the primary sense of the term. The *Gītā* also does not say that *kartṛtva* is the *dharma* of *antaḥkaraṇa* and it is falsely superimposed on the Self. Nor does it say that *jīva* is a *pratibimba* in the sense understood by Madhva. The *Gītā* specifically states that among the five factors, which are needed for the accomplishment of all actions viz., the body, the individual self, the sense-organs, the fivefold functions of vital breath and *daivam, Īśvara* plays an important role since He is the controller of all the activities of the individual. The *Vedāntasūtra*[8] also acknowledges this fact when it says that *kartṛtva* is endowed by *Paramātman* who is the contoller of all beings in the universe. But this does not negate the *kartṛtva* to the *jīva.* The premises on the basis of which *kartṛtva* is denied to the *jīva* are therefore untenable. The view advanced by Rāmānuja is in full accord with the teaching of the *Gītā*.

III. The Status of the Universe

In chapter 19, we have given an account of the theory of the universe. According to the *Gītā*, the universe has its origin in *Paramātman*, who is its creator and also the destroyer. It is brought into existence by causing the evolution of *prakṛti* or the primordial cosmic matter. It is also sustained and controlled by Him by abiding in all beings as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*). The non-sentient cosmic matter which is described as *aparā prakṛti* as distinct from *parā prakṛti* or sentient souls, belongs to *Paramātman*. The entire universe including all the glorious entities that exist are regarded as the *vibhūtis* or the manifest attributes of *Īśvara*. The *prakṛti* is also described as the *māyā* of *Paramātman*, constituted of three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. It is through this threefold *māyā*, as a media, that the variegated universe is created. All these teachings about the universe convey the idea that the universe is real and not illusory.

In interpreting some of these verses relating to the universe, Śaṁkara advances the view that the universe is illusory in character on the basis of the fundamental premise of Advaita Vedānta viz., that Brahman alone is real and every thing other than it is illusory. That is, other than Brahman, which is the absolute Reality, the universe as such does not really exist. According to Śaṁkara, Brahman itself appears as the universe due to *avidyā*. The term *māyā* employed in the *Gītā* is interpreted as the illusory power (*śakti*) of Brahman which conceals the true nature of Brahman and causes the projection of the appearance of the universe, just as the rope appears as snake due to the *ajñāna* or ignorance of the true nature of the rope. *Māyā* is the cosmic principle of illusion. Its nature is indeterminable either as real or unreal but different from both (*anirvacanīya*).

This is not the place to go into the details of this doctrine and its merit. We are only concerned here with the question whether this theory as conceived by Advaita Vedānta is taught in the *Gītā* and if not, whether it would be justifiable on the basis of it to uphold the theory of the universe as illusory. We have fully discussed the relevant verses bearing on *māyā* in chapters 7 and 19. As observed therein, the term *māyā* does not imply that it is the cosmic principle of illusion. The fact that it is equated with the *prakṛti* constituted of three *guṇas* viz., *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, suggests that it is a real ontological entity, which though distinct from *Paramātman*, is inherently related to Him. As rightly interpreted both by Rāmānuja and Madhva, it is the unique power of *Paramātman* through which He creates the variegated universe. The universe as a product of *māyā* caused by the *saṁkalpa* or will of *Paramātman* cannot be illusory, as contended by Śaṁkara but real, as maintained by Rāmānuja and Madhva.

The doctrine of *māyā* as conceived by Śaṁkara is also not logically tenable. Both Rāmānuja and Madhva have discussed this theory in detail in their commentaries on the *Vedāntasūtra* and have also written independent treatises to show that it is riddled with contradictions when subjected to logical analysis. Besides, this doctrine is not supported either by the Upaniṣads or the *Vedāntasūtra*. According to them, the *Gītā* also does not subscribe to it. There is no verse in the *Gītā* which states explicitly that the universe is illusory. The statement of Lord Kṛṣṇa that the entire universe owes its existence to Him, while He Himself does not depend upon it (*mattaḥ parataram na anyat kiṁcid asti*) does not imply that the universe does not exist apart from *Paramātman*. It only emphasizes the supreme rulership of *Īśvara* and the dependence of the universe on Him for its sustenance. Similarly the equation of *Paramātman* with all the entities in the universe does not imply that the universe does not exist as a separate reality other than *Paramātman*. Thus, the fundamental premise of Śaṁkara on the basis of which the phenomenal character of the universe is sought to be established is not tenable. Rāmānuja and Madhva have taken their stand on the authority of the Upaniṣads. According to the Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa, Brahman abides in all sentient beings and non-sentient entities as their Inner Controller and by virtue of its immanence as *antaryāmin* in all entities, the universe is equated with Brahman. The Upaniṣadic statement: All this is Brahman (*sarvaṁ khalvidam brahma*) implies, according to Rāmānuja, that Brahmaṅ is the Inner Controller of everything.

According to Madhva, the equation of the universe with Brahman signifies that Brahman is the sole independent Reality and the universe is dependent on it for its existence. Thus, the stand taken by Rāmānuja and Madhva is justifiable, whereas the premise of Śaṁkara does not find any support either in the Upaniṣads or the *Gītā*.

IV. THE THEORY OF *SĀDHANA*

The theory of *sādhana* constitutes the central theme of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The *Gītā* has laid down *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* as the *sādhana* for the attainment of the Supreme Goal. These are not alternative means for *mokṣa* or final liberation from bondage but are interrelated. The main question is: of the three pathways, which one is the direct means to *mokṣa* and which are the subordinate means to it. The commentators maintain diverse views regarding this matter due to different theories adopted by them. It is therefore important to discuss the views of the commentators and evaluate the assumptions adopted by them in order to determine the correct theory of the *Gītā* on *sādhana*.

Śaṁkara in the preface to his bhāṣya states: "It is the decisive view of the *Gītā-śāstra* that through the means of *tattva-jñāna* alone *mokṣa* is attained and not by the combination of *karma* and that this view will be established while examining the relevant parts of the *Gītā*.[9] Accordingly *jñāna-yoga* taken in the sense of the realization of the identity of *jīva* as Brahman is the direct means to *mokṣa*. Both *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* are aids to *jñāna-yoga*. *Karma-yoga* understood as the performance of the prescribed deeds by abandoning attachment to the deeds and relinquishing the desires for their results serves the purpose of securing the mental purity (*sattvaśuddhi*) which is helpful to attain the true knowledge of the Self. Śaṁkara draws a distinction between two types of persons known as *jñāna-niṣṭhas* or those who are well established in the knowledge of the Self such as the ascetics (*parivrājakas*) after having renounced all the prescribed deeds and *karma-niṣṭhas* or others such as the householders (*gṛhasthas*) who have to perform *karmas*. According to Śaṁkara, the former are qualified to follow the *jñāna-mārga* and for them the renunciation of the prescribed deeds is mandatory. The latter have to resort to the *karma-mārga* for securing *sattva-śuddhi*. The *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are thus two exclusive paths intended for two different categories of persons. As regards *bhakti-yoga*, it serves the purpose of attaining *jñāna* or the direct realization of the self.

According to Madhva, *aparokṣa-jñāna* or the direct vision of *Paramātman* obtained by the practice of *jñāna-yoga,* also known as *dhyāna-yoga* and *samādhi-yoga,* is the direct means to *mokṣa*. The *jñāna-yoga,* which is understood by Madhva as the knowledge of *jīvātman* and *Paramātman,* is the means to *aparokṣa-jñāna*. *Karma-*

yoga as the *niṣkāma-karmānuṣṭhāna* along with the *saṁnyāsa* in the sense of renunciation of passion and prejudice serves as an aid to *dhyāna-yoga*. *Bhakti-yoga* is not distinct from *dhyāna-yoga*. The same *dhyāna-yoga* practised with *bhakti* or unswerving devotion to *Paramātman* is regarded as *bhakti-yoga*. Madhva does not admit that *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* are exclusive paths. The performance of prescribed *karmas* according to one's *varṇa* and *āśrama* is mandatory for all aspirants for *mokṣa* until the attainment of *aparokṣa-jñāna*. They are only required to renounce the attachment to the deeds and the desires for their results and not the *karmas*.

According to Rāmānuja, *bhakti-yoga* or the observance of unceasing meditation on *Paramātman* is the direct means to *mokṣa*. This is the same as the *upāsanā*, also termed as *nididhyāsana*, laid down by the Upaniṣads as the means to *mokṣa*. The *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are the aids to *bhakti-yoga*. *Karma-yoga* is the performance of the prescribed deeds by renouncing the attachment to the deeds and also desires for the results, along with the knowledge of the true nature of *jīvātman* (*ātma-yāthātmya-jñāna*). It serves as the means to the vision of *jīvātman* (*ātmāvalokana*) either directly or through *jñāna-yoga*. *Jñāna-yoga* is understood as the observance of constant meditation on *jīvātman* leading to the vision of the self. *Karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are the subordinate means to *mokṣa*. Rāmānuja also does not draw a distinction between *karma-niṣṭhas* and *jñāna-niṣṭhas*. Nor does he admit that *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are exclusive paths intended for different categories of people. The performance of the prescribed deeds is mandatory for all aspirants for *mokṣa* until the final liberation from bondage is attained.

We have discussed all these views in detail in the preceding chapters. We shall confine our attention to an objective evaluation of the following contentions of the commentators on the basis of which the divergent views are upheld regarding the *sādhana* in order to determine the correct view of the *Gītā* on this subject:

1. *Jñāna* alone is the direct means to *mokṣa*, while *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* subserve it (acc.to S).
2. *Bhakti-yoga* is the direct means to *mokṣa*, while *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are aids to it (acc. to R).
3. *Aparokṣa-jñāna* arising from *dhyāna-yoga* which is the same as *bhakti-yoga*, is the direct means to *mokṣa*, while *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* understood as the knowledge of the true nature of *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* are aids to *aparokṣa-jñāna*. (acc. to M).

If we objectively examine the verses dealing with this matter, the *Gītā* does not appear to support the views of Śaṁkara and Madhva. As we have pointed out in the chapter on the *sādhana,* the *Gītā* has prescribed three distinct disciplines named as *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga,* which as interrelated discipline constitute the *sādhana* for *mokṣa.* The *adhyāyas* II-VI deal with *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga,* while the *adhyāyas* VII-XII cover *bhakti-yoga.* The order in which these are presented indicates that *bhakti-yoga* as aided by *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* is the direct means to *mokṣa.* Besides, the *Gītā* explicitly states that by no other means than unswerving devotion to *Paramātman,* He can be truly seen and attained. It also specifically enjoins that one should meditate on *Paramātman* and worship Him in all possible ways in order to attain Him. In view of these statements, it cannot be said that only *tattva-jñāna* is the direct means to *mokṣa,* as Śaṁkara says. *Tattva-jñāna* for Śaṁkara is the direct realization of the *jīvātman* as identical with *Paramātman* (*brahmātmaikya jñāna*). The goal of *jñāna-yoga,* also named as *sāṁkhya-yoga,* is the realization of the *jīvātman,* according to the teachings of the *Gītā* as presented in the *adhyāyas* II-VI. In the absence of specific mention that *jīvātman* is essentially *Paramātman,* it cannot be said that *tattva-jñāna* in the sense of *ātmaikya-jñāna* is the sole means to *mokṣa.* The attainment of *Paramātman* which is the goal of *bhakti-yoga* cannot also be claimed as the realization of the identity of the *jīva* and *Paramātman* since the expressions such as *mam aiṣyasi, upaiti, āpnoti* do not convey the idea of oneness of *jīva* and *Paramātman* (*tādātmya*) but on the contrary, a status of similarity (*sādharmya*). Thus, the main contention of Śaṁkara that *ātmaikya-jñāna* is the sole means of *mokṣa* cannot be established on the authority of the *Gītā.*

According to Madhva, the *aparokṣa-jñāna* is the direct means to *mokṣa. Aparokṣa-jñāna* means direct vision or *darśana* of *Paramātman* which arises from the pursuit of *dhyāna-yoga* as enunciated in the sixth *adhyāya.* For Madhva this *dhyāna-yoga,* also named as *samādhi-yoga,* is not different from *bhakti-yoga* outlined in the *adhyāyas* VII-XII. The same *dhyāna-yoga* pursued with *bhakti* or undivided devotion to *Paramātman,* referred to in the second *ṣaṭka* is regarded as *bhakti-yoga.* The spiritual discipline (*upāya*) in which *bhakti* is prominent becomes *bhakti-yoga* (*bhakti pracuro yogaḥ bhakti-yoga*). He does not also admit that *jñāna-yoga* outlined in the sixth *adhyāya* is a distinct discipline, as acknowledged by Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja.

We have discussed this matter in chapters 6 and 20 and as observed therein, *jñāna-yoga*, according to the *Gītā* is a separate discipline, the goal of which is *ātma-sākṣātkāra* or the attainment of the vision of the *jīvātman*. It is also distinct from *bhakti-yoga*, though the methodology or the technique of the *yoga* practice in the form of the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is common to both. The goal of *jñāna-yoga* is the vision of the *jīvātman*, whereas the goal of *bhakti-yoga* is attainment of *Paramātman*. The *Gītā* itself acknowledges that there are three pathways by means of which *ātman* can be realized. The relevant verse reads: *dhyānena ātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā; anye sāṁkhyena yogena karma-yogena ca apare.*[10] It means: "Some perceive the Self (*ātmānam*) abiding in the self (body) by meditation (*dhyānena*) through the mind (*ātmanā*); others by *sāṁkhya-yoga* and still others by *karma-yoga*. If we take the verse as it reads, it is obvious that *bhakti-yoga* denoted by the word *dhyāna* or meditation, *jñāna-yoga* denoted by the word *sāṁkhya* and *karma-yoga* are different pathways though they are interrelated and constitute the *sādhana* for *mokṣa*. The word *ātman* can also mean *Paramātman*. But in the context of *jñāna-yoga* referred to in the II-VI *adhyāyas*, it denotes the *jīvātman*, which is the goal of attainment. In the twelfth *adhyāya*, the *Gītā* itself acknowledges the distinction between *jīvātma upāsanā* or meditation on *jīvātman*, denoted by the word *akṣara* and *Paramātma upāsanā* leading to the attainment of *Paramātman*. As we have observed in chapter 12, the term *akṣara* in this context does not denote either the *Nirguṇa* Brahman, as claimed by Śaṁkara or Goddess Lakṣmī, as conceived by Madhva.[11] Hence the supposition of Madhva that *dhyāna-yoga* outlined in *adhyāya* VI is the direct means to *aparokṣa-jñāna* by which *mokṣa* is attained is not in conformity with the teachings of the *Gītā*.

According to Rāmānuja, *bhakti-yoga* as aided by *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, is the direct means to *mokṣa*. *Bhakti-yoga* refers to the unceasing meditation on *Paramātman* with unswerving devotion (*ananya-bhakti*) by observing the rigorous eightfold *yoga* discipline corresponding to the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* of Patañjali. It also includes the performance of *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* as a worship of *Paramātman* and also the cultivation of the ethical virtues such as *sama, dama, vairāgya*, etc. In view of it, *karma-yoga* is considered as an aid to *bhakti-yoga* as it helps to secure the *sattva-śuddhi* needed for the observance of *bhakti-yoga*. *Bhakti-yoga* also needs *jñāna-yoga* since it involves the control of the senses and mind and also steadfast knowledge of *jīvātman* leading to the realization of the true nature of the *jīvātman* (*ātma-sākṣātkāra*). The realization of the *jīvātman* as an integral part of *Paramātman* helps to promote *bhakti* towards *Paramātman* and thereby facilitate easy progress in the observance of *bhakti-yoga* until the devotee obtains a clearer vision of *Paramātman* (*darśana*). It is only after the *darśana* that the spiritual aspirant becomes free from bondage and attains *Paramātman* in the state of *mukti*.

If we take due note of the sequence of the teachings imparted to Arjuna by Lord Kṛṣṇa commencing from the second *adhyāya* to the twelfth, it becomes evident that the stand taken by Rāmānuja on *sādhana* fully conforms to the views of the *Gītā*. Lord Kṛṣṇa first tells Arjuna about the true nature of *jīvātman* as distinct from the body. He is then instructed to do his duty without the expectation of any reward for it and also free from selfish attachment (*niṣkāma-karma*). He is also told of the state of *sthitaprajña*, which is an outcome of *karma-yoga* performed in the spirit of disinterestedness. In the subsequent *adhyāyas* (III-V), the details of *karma-yoga* and its relation to *jñāna-yoga* or *saṁnyāsa-yoga* are presented. In this connection Arjuna is instructed to follow *karma-yoga* which is easier than *jñāna-yoga*. In the sixth *adhyāya* the method of practising *jñāna-yoga* is taught. It is also pointed out that of all the different disciplines including *jñāna-yoga*, one who meditates on *Paramātman* is considered the greatest.[12] At this stage the observance of *bhakti-yoga* is introduced as the means of attainment of *Paramātman*. Arjuna is specifically told that there is no other means than the unswerving *bhakti* or meditation on *Paramātman* to attain Him. In the twelfth *adhyāya*, in reply to the query made by Arjuna regarding the relative merit of *Paramātmā-upāsanā* and *akṣara-upāsanā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa explicitly states that the spiritual aspirant who follows the meditation on *Paramātman* as the Supreme Goal of attainment, is the greatest (*yogavittama*). In the concluding *adhyāya*, which is a resume of what is taught earlier, the *Gītā* emphatically states that *bhakti-yoga* is the direct means of attaining *Paramātman*. Thus, it follows that *bhakti-yoga* as aided by *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* is the direct means to *mokṣa*. The mere *jñāna-yoga* leading to the realization of *jīvātman* cannot be the direct means to *mokṣa*, since *jīvātman* is not identical with *Paramātman*. Nor mere *jñāna-yoga* named as *dhyāna-yoga* leading to *aparokṣa-jñāna* is the direct means to *mokṣa*, since *jñāna-yoga* outlined in the sixth *adhyāya* is not the same as *bhakti-yoga*. The stand taken by Rāmānuja therefore conforms better to the teachings of the *Gītā* than that of Śaṁkara and Madhva.

The commentators also differ in their views regarding the role of *karma-yoga* as the means to *mokṣa.* Though *karma-yoga* is accepted as an essential part of the *sādhana,* Śaṁkara does not consider that it is required for the aspirants who pursue the pathway of *jñāna* on the assumption that the ascetics (*parivrājakas*) who have already renounced the *karmas* and who are *jñānaniṣṭhas* or well-established in the knowledge of the Self are not required to perform the *karmas.* Śaṁkara therefore advocates the renunciation of all the prescribed deeds by the *jñānaniṣṭhas* since there is no need for them to observe the *karmas* which are opposed to *jñāna.* This supposition is not warranted by the *Gītā.* It explicitly states that *karmas* such as *yajña, dāna, tapas,* etc., should not be given up but performed. What is to be renounced is only the attachment to the *karmas* and the desire for their fruits. The *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* have to be performed until the spiritual goal is attained. This teaching of the *Gītā* is in conformity to the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra.* The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* states that Brahmins seek to know Brahman by *yajña, dāna, tapas,* etc. Based on this, the *Vedāntasūtra* says that all the ritualistic deeds are needed as aids to *upāsanā* (*sarvāpekṣā ca yajñādi śruteḥ*). As we have pointed out in the chapter on *sādhana,* there is no opposition between *jñāna* and *karma.* The *Gītā* also does not acknowledge the distinction between *jñānaniṣṭhas* and *karmaniṣṭhas.* Nor does it admit that *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* are exclusive paths intended for two different categories of aspirants.

Regarding the nature of *jñāna-yoga* and its place in the *sādhana* for *mokṣa,* the commentators have adopted different views. For Śaṁkara, it is the direct means to *mokṣa* and it cannot be an aid to *bhakti-yoga.* For Madhva, it is the same as the *dhyāna-yoga* or *bhakti-yoga* and hence it is not an aid to *bhakti-yoga.* For Rāmānuja, *jñāna-yoga* is a separate discipline leading to the vision of *jīvātman* and it therefore serves as an aid (*aṅga*) to *bhakti-yoga.*

We have discussed this matter both in chapters 6 and 20. As observed therein, the *Gītā* does not support the views of both Śaṁkara and Madhva. The goal of *jñāna-yoga* is the direct realization of *jīvātman* in its true nature (*ātmāvalokana*). The *sākṣātkāra* of *jīvātman* cannot be the realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman, as contended by Śaṁkara, since the *Gītā* does not teach the identity of the two. Nor is it *Paramātmā-sākṣātkāra,* as maintained by Madhva, since the object of meditation in the *jñāna-yoga* is *jīvātman*. As the *jīvātma-sākṣātkāra* is the goal of *jñāna-yoga*, as is evident in the *Gītā*, it serves as an aid to *bhakti-yoga*. The vv. 54 and 55 in the eighteenth *adhyāya*, clearly point out that one who has realized the *jīvātman* through the pursuit of *jñāna-yoga* attains *parā bhakti* by means of which *Paramātman* is seen in His true form and then attained (*bhaktyā mām abhijānāti tattvataḥ, tato māṁ tattvato jñātvā viśate tadantaram*).[13] Thus, the stand taken by Rāmānuja regarding the *sādhana* comprising *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* and their interrelation is in full accord with the teachings of the *Gītā*.

The above theory of *sādhana* advanced by Rāmānuja also conforms to the Upaniṣadic teaching and the *Vedāntasūtra*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* describes the *sādhana* for the attainment of *ātman* (Brahman) in the following significant statement:

> *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ.*[14]
> The *ātman* is to be seen (realized), to be heard, to be reflected and meditated upon.

According to this statement, as generally agreed by the commentators, *nididhyāsana* or meditation is the means to attain Brahman, while *śravaṇa* or acquision of knowledge about Brahman from the preceptor and *manana* or reflection over what is learnt, are means to *nididhyāsana*. The term *nididhyāsana* signifies, according to the Upaniṣad, the unceasing meditation on Brahman until it culminates in *darśana* or the vision of Brahman. For Śaṁkara *darśana* itself is the goal, whereas Madhva takes it as the *aparokṣa-jñāna* or the direct perception of *Paramātman* leading to the *mokṣa*. Rāmānuja interprets it as the culminating state of *nididhyāsana* itself resulting in clearer vision of *Paramātman* and it is not therefore a separate means to *mokṣa*. If *darśana* is taken as a separate means, as Madhva interprets, then *nididhyāsana* becomes a subordinate means to *mokṣa*, which is against the general trend of the Upaniṣad. Both according to the Upaniṣad and the *Vedāntasūtra*, *upāsanā* or *vidyā*, which is synonymous with *nididhyāsana* is the direct means to *mokṣa*. According to the Vedic *Nighaṇṭu*, the term *nididhyāsana*, also called *upāsanā*, is synonymous with *bhakti* or *bhakti-yoga* referred to in the *Gītā* (*sevā bhaktir-upāsti*). Thus, *bhakti-yoga* which is the same as *nididhyāsana* of the Upaniṣad is the direct means to *mokṣa*.

The Upaniṣad has laid down that the observance of *karma* in the form of *yajña, dāna, tapas,* etc., is necessary to know Brahman.[15] It also emphasizes the cultivation of ethical virtues such as *śama, dama,* etc.[16] This corresponds to the practice of *karma-yoga* as subsidiary means to *nididhyāsana.* The *Īśa Upaniṣad* also specifically mentions that by means of *vidyā* (*upāsanā*) aided by the performance of prescribed deeds (*avidyā*) Brahman is attained (*avidyayā mṛtyum tīrtva vidyayā amṛtam aśnute*).

The *upāsanā* on *jīvātman* is also admitted by the Upaniṣad as a subsidiary means to the *upāsanā* on Brahman. The passage in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* dealing with *dahara-vidyā* or meditation on Brahman as abiding in the inner recess of the heart (*daharākāśa*), describes the manner in which the *daharopāsanā* is to be performed and the nature of the goal attained by the *jīvātman.* In this connection, the same Upaniṣad in a later passage narrates how Prajāpati, the chief of the celestial deities, instructs Indra and Virocana about the nature of *jīvātman* and enjoins the *upāsanā* on *ātman* (*jīvātman*) in order to realize the *jīvātman* in its true nature as devoid of all evil (*apahata-pāpma*), as *satyakāma, satyasaṁkalpa.*[17] This teaching of Prajāpati about the *upāsanā* on the *jīvātman* which follows immediately after the teaching of the *daharopāsanā* or meditation on Brahman, is intended, as explained by Rāmānuja, to show that *ātma-vidyā* (*upāsanā* on *jīvātman*) is a subsidiary aid to *dahara-vidyā* or the *upāsanā* on *Paramātman.* In the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* also, there is a passage which states that by means of *adhyātma-yoga,* which stands for *jñāna-yoga,* an aspirant for *mokṣa* overcomes bondage after knowing Brahman (*adhyātma-yogādhigamena devam matvā dhīro harṣa śokau jahāti*).[18] On the basis of these scriptural authority, Rāmānuja takes the view that *jñāna-yoga* taught in the sixth *adhyāya* is a subsidiary means to *bhakti-yoga.* As we have pointed out earlier, the *Gītā* also acknowledges that one who has realized the *jīvātman* in its true nature (*brahma-bhūta*) secures the perfect *bhakti* (*parāṁ bhakti*) by means of which he comes to know *Paramātman* in His true form and thereafter attain Him. Thus, the stand taken by Rāmānuja on the *sādhana* for *mokṣa* as taught in the *Gītā* is fully justified. This is not the case either with Śaṁkara or Madhva. For Madhva, *jñāna-yoga* taught in the sixth *adhyāya,* which is named as *dhyāna-yoga,* is not different from *bhakti-yoga,* since the goal of attainment in both is *Paramātman.* He does not accept the theory of the *upāsanā* on *jīvātman,* though it is taught in the *Gītā* in the name of *upāsanā* on *akṣara.* Śaṁkara accepts *jñāna-yoga* as distinct from *bhakti-yoga* but the goal of its attainment is not the *jīvātman* in its true nature as Rāmānuja states but it is Brahman itself as identical with *jīva*. Thus, both Śaṁkara and Madhva deviate from the teaching of the *Gītā* on the *sādhana*, whereas Rāmānuja faithfully follows it.

The Parama-puruṣārtha

According to the teachings of the *Gītā*, as explained in the preceding chapter, it is clear that the attainment of a status of equality with *Paramātman* (*sādharmya*) by the *jīvātman* constitutes the Supreme Goal. But Śaṁkara contends that it is the oneness (*tādātmya*) in the sense of the realization of identity of the *jīva* and Brahman. But this view is not tenable since the *Gītā* does not support the theory of the identity of the *jīva* and Brahman. Both Madhva and Rāmānuja therefore conform to the view of the *Gītā*. This is also in accordance with the teaching of the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra* which affirm *sāmya* or equal status with Brahman in the state of *mukti*.[19]

Now taking into consideration the views of the commentators on the main doctrines of the Vedānta viz., *tattvas—Paramātman, jīvātman* and *jagat-sādhana* and *parama-puruṣārtha*, we have to determine the nature of the philosophy adumbrated in the *Bhagavadgītā*. The question whether it is Advaita of Śaṁkara or Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja or the Dvaita of Madhva is not relevant for the reason that the *Gītā* is not a treatise which presents a well-developed and coherent system of thought. It contains teachings on various topics which are scattered all over the eighteen *adhyāyas*. It is therefore more appropriate to ask the question: To what extent the philosophical doctrines advanced by the three schools of thought and for which they seek support in the teachings of the *Gītā*, are reflected in this important sourcebook of Vedānta. Our objective study reveals that the main tenets of the Advaita Vedānta viz., *Nirviśeṣa* Brahman is the Ultimate Reality, *jīvātman* is non-different from Brahman, the universe is phenomenal in character, *māyā* is the cosmic principle of illusion and *ātmaikya-jñāna* is the sole means of *mokṣa*, are not reflected in the *Bhagavadgītā*. As regards Rāmānuja and Madhva, their views related to the doctrines of *Paramātman, jīvātman,* the universe and *parama-puruṣārtha*, generally conform to the teachings of the *Gītā*. With regard to the doctrine of *sādhana*, the view adopted by Madhva that *jñāna-yoga*, also named as *dhyāna-yoga*, enunciated in the sixth *adhyāya*, is the means to the *aparokṣa-jñāna* or the direct perception of *Paramātman* leading to *mokṣa*, does not conform to the teachings of the *Gītā*. But the view advanced by Rāmānuja that only *bhakti-yoga* as distinct from *jñāna-yoga*, is the direct means to the attainment of *Paramātman* is in full accord with the teachings of the *Gītā*.

It is outside the scope of the present book to discuss the relative merits of the three schools of Vedānta. Each can be justified from the standpoint of the fundamental premises advocated by the exponents of the respective systems. Our main objective is to determine to what extent the doctrines advanced by each school of the Vedānta are supported by the *Bhagavadgītā*. It is hoped that this task is accomplished and this book would throw new light on the philosophy of the *Gītā*.

REFERENCES

1. See *supra*, ch. 15, pp. 163-64.
2. See *supra*, ch. 12, pp. 122-43.
3. *BG*, VII.7 and X.12.
4. Ibid., XIII.2.
5. *VS*, II.3-42.
6. Ibid., II.3-33. See also *supra*, ch. 19, pp. 210-11.
7. *Praśna Up.*, IV.9, *eṣa hi draṣṭā spraṣṭā śrotrā ghrātā rasayitā mantā boddhā kartā vijñānātmā puruṣaḥ.*
8. Ibid., VII.3-41, *parāt tu tat śruteḥ.*
9. SB, on *BG*, II, *Gītā-śāstre kevalādeva tattvajñānāt mokṣaprāptiḥ na karma-samuccayāt iti niścito arthaḥ. Tathā prakaraṇataḥ vibhajya tatra tatra darśayāmaḥ.*
10. *BG*, XIII.24.
11. See *supra*, ch. 12, pp. 122-23.
12. See *BG*, VI.47. See also *supra*, ch. 6, pp. 72-73.
13. See *supra*, ch. 18, pp. 188-90.
14. See *Bṛ. Up.*, II.4-5.
15. Ibid., IV.4-22.
16. Ibid., IV.4-23.
17. Ibid., VIII.7.1.
18. *Kaṭha Up.*, I.2-12.
19. *Muṇḍ. Up.*, III.1-3. See also *VS*, IV.4-17.

Glossary

abheda	non-difference; identity acc. to S.
abhyāsa	Repeated practice.
ācārya	Spiritual preceptor, an exponent of Vedānta.
acit	Non-sentient matter; the primordial cosmic matter.
ādhāra	That which serves as the ground or basis; the supporter.
ādheya	That which is sustained; the dependant.
adhibhūta	Immutable cosmic matter, acc. to S; perishable cosmic matter, acc. to R and M.
adhidaiva	Cosmic soul, acc. to S; the individual self, acc. to R; Saṁkarṣaṇa, acc. to M.
ādhikārika	One who is under the command of the Supreme Lord, acc. to M.
adhiyajña	The Supreme Lord.
adhyāropa	Superimposition.
adhyātma	The individual self; that which is attached to the *jīva*, acc. to R.
advaita	Non-dualism; oneness of the complex entity; the system of Vedānta associated with Śaṁkara.
ahaṁkāra	Egotism; an evolute of *prakṛti.*
aja	Unborn.
ajñāna	Ignorance; absence of knowledge, acc. to R.
akarma	Inaction, acc. to S and M; *jñāna-yoga,* acc. to R.
aiśvarya	Wealth; heavenly prosperity; glory.
ākāśa	Cosmic ether; etherial space.
akṣara	The imperishable; the Brahman; the *jīvātman*; the *prakṛti.*

aṁśa	A part; an integral part of a complex whole, acc. to R; similarity in respect of certain attributes, acc. to M.
anādi	That which has no beginning; beginningless.
ananya-bhakti	Unswerving devotion to *Paramātman.*
ananta	Infinite; immeasurable.
antaḥkaraṇa	Internal sense-organ; mind.
antaryāmin	The Inner Controller; the immanent Supreme Self which controls everything from within; *Paramātman.*
antimasmṛti	Final thought arising at the time of death.
apara brahma	Brahman conditioned by *māyā,* acc. to S; *Īśvara.*
aparā prakṛti	Lower *prakṛti;* primordial cosmic matter.
aparigraha	To be free from longings for possession.
aparokṣa jñāna	Direct perception of *Paramātman,* acc. to M.
arcirādi-mārga	The path of the celestial deities through which the liberated soul traverses to higher realm.
arthārthī	One who aspires for wealth.
asat	That which does not exist; that which constantly changes, acc. to S; *prakṛti,* acc. to M; physical body acc. to R.
āsurī-sampat	Demoniac nature.
ātman	The individual self; the Supreme Self; the *Paramātman.*
ātmaikya jñāna	The knowledge of the identity of *jīva* with Brahman, acc. to S.
ātmāvalokana	Direct vision of the individual self.
aupādhika	What is caused by a limiting adjunct.
avatāra	Incarnation of the Supreme Being; descent of God.
avikāra	Not subject to any change or modification.
avyakta	Unmanifest; *prakṛti,* acc. to M.
avināśa	Indestructible.
baddha	Bound; the soul in bondage.
bhakti	Loving devotion to God; devoted meditation on *Paramātman.*

bhakti-yoga	Unceasing meditation adopted as a *sādhana* to *mokṣa.*
bhāṣya	Commentary on the *Gītā*, the Upaniṣads, the *Vedāntasūtras* or any philosophical treatise.
bhoktā	One who experiences the fruits of action.
bimba	Original from.
bimba-pratibimbavāda	The theory that *jīva* is similar to and dependent on Brahman (acc. to M).
brahma	The ultimate Reality in Vedānta; the Supreme Being (Brahman); the Supreme God (*Paramātman*); *jīvātman* (acc. to R); *prakṛti*; *cit-prakṛti* (Goddess Lakṣmī), acc. to M.
brahma-bhūta	Becoming one with Brahman, acc. to S; to become fit to realize the true nature of *jīvātman*, acc. to R; to become beloved of Brahman with the grace of Goddess Lakṣmī, acc. to M.
brahma-nirvāṇa	The state of *mokṣa*, acc. to M; blissful experience of *jīvātman*, acc. to R.
brāhmīsthiti	The state of being established in Brahman, acc. to S and M; the state of one who has attained *jīvātman*, acc. to R.
buddhi	Knowledge; intellect.
buddhi-yoga	Knowledge of the true nature of *ātman*, acc. to S; *upāya* in the from of knowledge of *ātman*, acc. to M; clear vision of *Paramātman*, acc. to R.
cit	Sentient being; the individual self.
cit-prakṛti	Goddess Lakṣmī, acc. to M.
dama	Self-restraint.
dāna	Charity; offering of gifts.
darśana	Vision or direct realization of the Self; specific state of meditation characterized with vividness, acc. to R; direct perception of *Paramātman*, acc. to M.
dehātma-bhrama	The delusion of the body itself as the self.
dhāma	Goal; abode.
dhruvānusmṛti	Steadfast meditation.

dhyāna	Contemplation; unceasing meditation.
daivī-sampat	Divine nature.
draṣṭā	The seer; *jīva* acc. to R and M
dveṣa	Aversion.
dvaita	Dualism; the system of Vedānta founded by Madhva.
guṇas	Quality; attribute; essential attributes or constituents of *prakṛti* viz., *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.*
hita	Means to achieve the Supreme Goal; *sādhana.*
indriyas	Sense organs.
Īśvara	The Supreme Self as the Ruler of all; God.
jagat-kāraṇa	Primary cause of the universe.
jijñāsu	One who desires to know the true nature of *Paramātman,* acc. to S. One who is desirous of realizing the *jīvātman* in its true nature, acc. to R.
jīvātman/jīva	The individual self; the conditioned self, acc. to S.
jīvanmukti	Liberation while one is still embodied.
jñāna	Knowledge; knowledge of *jīvātman*; knowledge of *Paramātman*; knowledge leading to the realization of identity of *jīva* and Brahman, acc. to S.
jñānī	One who is devoted to *Paramātman.*
jñānaniṣṭha	One who is well established in the knowledge of *ātman,* acc. to S; one who pursues the pathway of knowledge, acc. to R.
jñāna-yoga	The yogic discipline adopted to attain the vision of *jīvātman,* acc. to R; knowledge of the true nature of *Paramātman,* acc. to M; the pathway of knowledge adopted for the direct realization of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman, acc. to S.
jñātā	The knower; the knowing subject.
jñeyam	That which is to be known; object of knowledge.
kaivalya	The state of existence for the *jīvātman* in

	its true form as dissociated with the body.
kāmya-karma	Deeds done with motivation for results.
karaṇa	Sense organs.
karma	Action; prescribed ritualistic deeds; result of past deeds.
karmaniṣṭha	One who is engaged in the performance of the prescribed deeds.
karma-saṁnyāsa	Renunciation of *karmas*, acc. to S; the renunciation of the attachment to *karmas* and the desire for their fruits, acc. to R and M.
karma-yoga	The pathway of *karma*; the observance of the prescribed deeds as part of the *sādhana* for *mokṣa*.
kartā	Agent of action; the self as the agent of action.
kartṛtva	Process of action; activity.
kartṛtva tyāga	Abandonment of attachment to the *karma* as the agent of action.
kramamukti	Liberation in two stages.
kṣara	That which is perishable.
kṣatriya	Warrior class.
kṣetra	The field of experience; the physical body; the universe, acc. to M.
kṣetrajña	The knower of the field; the *jīvātman*; *Paramātman*, acc. to M.
kuṭastha	That which is unchanging; *jīva* in its liberated state, acc. to R.
laya	Dissolution of the universe.
liṅga	Identity mark; characteristic.
lokasaṁgraha	Welfare of the world.
mahat	The great; evolute of *prakṛti*.
mahat-brahma	Non-sentient *prakṛti*; *cit-prakṛti*, acc. to M.
manana	Logical reflection; contemplation.
mandādhikārī	Unenlightened person.
māyā	The cosmic principle which gives rise to the world/illusion, acc. to S; the power of *Īśvara* which causes the variegated universe, acc. to R; the primordial cosmic matter, the presiding female deity of

	prakṛti acc. to M.
mithyātva	Illusory character.
mokṣa	Liberation of the soul from bondage; union with the Supreme Being; the enjoyment of bliss in the higher realm.
mukti	The state of final liberation from bondage.
naimittika karma	Ritualistic deeds prescribed for specific occasions or specific purposes.
nairghaṇya	Cruelty.
naiṣkarmya	A state in which one is free from the performance of *karmas*; the culminating stage of *jñāna-yoga*, acc. to R.
nididhyāsana	Unceasing meditation on *Paramātman.*
nirvāṇa	*Mokṣa,* acc. to S; blissful state of *jīva,* acc. to R; the state of Brahman devoid of body (*nirvāṇa*) acc. to M.
nirviśeṣa/nirguṇa	Devoid of all characteristics; undifferentiated.
niṣkāma-karma	Performance of *karmas* without any attachment to them and without desire for their results.
nitya-karma	Ritualistic deeds laid down as mandatory.
para	Higher; the Supreme.
parabrahma	The Ultimate Reality; the higher Brahman, acc. to S; the Supreme God (*Paramātmā*), acc. to R and M.
paradharma	Duty of another person; *jñāna-yoga,* acc. to R.
paramātmā	The Supreme Self; Brahman; the Supreme God (*Īśvara*).
parama-puruṣārtha	The Supreme Goal; *mokṣa.*
parama-sāmya	Equal status of *jīva* with Brahman.
parā-prakṛti	The sentient *jīvas,* acc. to R; the conditioned *jīvas,* acc. to S; *cit-prakṛti* or Goddess Lakṣmī, acc. to M.
parama-niśreyas	The Supreme Spiritual Goal.
para-tattva	The Ultimate Reality; Brahman; *Paramātman.*
parivrājaka	An ascetic; one who has renounced all worldly desires.

prabhāva	Lordly power acc. to S; majesty of Lord, acc. to M; *svarūpa* and *svabhāva* of *Paramātman*, acc. to R.
prakṛti	The primordial cosmic matter; *māyā* of *Īśvara*, acc. to S; one's own nature.
pralaya	Dissolution of the universe.
prapatti	Total surrender of one's self to God seeking Him as sole refuge.
praśāsitāra	One who commands; the Supreme Lord.
puruṣa	The *jīvātman*; person.
puruṣottama	The Supreme Person; *Paramātman*; Brahman.
rāga	Attachment.
rajas	One of the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*; the quality which causes passion.
sādhana	The spiritual discipline laid down to attain Brahman; the means (*upāya*) to attain the spiritual goal.
sādharmya	Attainment of a status by *jīva* similar to that of *Paramātman*, acc. to R and M; becoming one with *Paramātman*, acc. to S.
śama	Tranquillity of mind; total renunciation of the *karmas*, acc. to S; concentration on God, acc. to M.
samadarśin	One who sees unity of all individual souls, acc. to S; one who sees equality of all souls in respect of their intrinsic nature, acc. to R; one who recognises that God pervades all beings in equal measure, acc. to R.
samādhi	State of trance; culminating stage of the eightfold *yoga* discipline.
saṁkalpa	Will; desire to do an act.
saṁkalpa-jñāna	Will of *Paramātman*.
sāṁkhya	The theory or knowledge of *ātman*; knowledge of *ātman* and *paramātman*, acc. to M; the name of the system founded by Kapila.
sāṁkhya-yoga	The pathway of knowledge of the self with renunciation of *karmas*, acc. to S; *jñāna-yoga*, acc. to R and M.

saṁnyāsa	Renunciation of all deeds, acc. to S; discharge of one's duties without passion, acc. to M; abandonment of attachment to *karmas* as an agent of action and also abandonment of desires for fruits, acc. to R; asceticism.
saṁsāra	Bondage.
sanātana	Primeval.
śaraṇāgati	Seeking God as the sole refuge.
śarīra	Body; that which is always supported and controlled by *Paramātman*, acc. to R.
śarīra-śarīribhava	The relation of body to the soul.
śarīrin	The self; one who sustains and controls all beings.
sarvagata	All-pervasive; abiding in all beings, acc. to R.
sarvasaṁkalpa-saṁnyāsa	Renunciation of all *karmas*, acc. to S; surrendering one's will to *Paramātman*, acc. to M; abandonment of all attachment to sense objects and also to the deeds, acc. to R.
śāstra	Sacred texts.
ṣaṭka	Hexad; a group of six *adhyāyas*.
sattva	One of the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*; the quality which causes illumination.
sattvaśuddhi	Purity of mind.
saviśeṣa	That which is qualified by attributes; Brahman as endowed with attributes.
śraddhā	Earnest faith in the observance of religious acts.
śravaṇa	Learning or comprehending what is taught by a preceptor.
sthitaprajña	Steadfastness in the knowledge of the self, acc. to R; a state of mind which is immersed in the direct perception of Brahman, acc. to M; steadfastness with the realization of the identity of the *jīva* and Brahman, acc. to S.
svadharma	One's own duty; what is dictated by one's own nature.

svādhyāya	Recitation of Vedic texts.
svarūpa	Essential nature.
tādātmya	Identity; non-difference.
tamas	Primordial cosmic matter.
tattva	Ultimate Reality; ontological entities such as Brahman, *jīva*, *jagat*; metaphysical category; theory.
tattva-jñāna	Knowledge of the true nature of *jīvātman* and *Paramātman.*
tyāga	Renunciation of prescribed deeds, acc. to S; renunciation of the attachment to the deeds and the desire for their fruits, acc. to R.
upādhi	Adjunct; limiting condition such as *avidyā.*
upāsanā	Steadfast meditation; unceasing meditation on *Paramātman* (Brahman).
upāya	Means to attain the goal.
uttama-puruṣa	Supreme Person; Supreme Self, acc. to S.
vairāgya	Non-attachment to earthly and heavenly objects.
vibhūti	Lord's glory; Lordship of God; divine manifestations, acc. to S.
vijñāna	Comprehensive knowledge of *Paramātman*, acc. to R and M; knowledge leading to the realization of the Self, acc. to S.
vikarma	Prohibited deeds, acc. to S and M; different types of deeds, acc. to R.
viśvarūpa	Cosmic from of God.
yajana	Worship of God with devotion.
yajña	Vedic sacrifice; performance of deeds prescribed by *śāstras.*
yoga	Means (*upāya*) to attain the Spiritual Goal.
yogārūḍha	One who has attained the goal; one who has ascended in *yoga*, acc. to M.

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